



Controlling Nonpoint Source Pollution

Pollution from nonpoint sources is a substantial contributor to the impairment of waters across the Great Lakes basin. Nonpoint source pollution is the diffuse, intermittent runoff of pollutants from various sources. Precipitation moving over and through the ground picks up pollutants from these sources, finally depositing them into lakes, rivers, wetlands, coastal waters, and even groundwater. Nonpoint source pollution is present throughout the basin, in many forms and with many interactions. As a result of its diffuse nature and the diversity of pollutants, nonpoint source pollution can be particularly difficult to address. There are programs in place, however, that have proven successful in preventing and controlling nonpoint source pollution.

Soil erosion and sedimentation are a primary source of land-based nonpoint source pollution to the Great Lakes system. Beyond water quality degradation, sedimentation reduces agricultural productivity, degrades fish and wildlife habitat, limits water-based recreation, reduces harbor capacity and damages water treatment and public water supply infrastructure. The Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control is about making a difference in water quality, land use and agricultural productivity. Since its inception in 1991, this federal-state partnership has supported over 400 locally-sponsored demonstration, information and education projects to reduce erosion and sedimentation throughout the Great Lakes region. Recognizing the important work of the Great Lakes Basin Program, Congress first authorized the program in 2002 and reauthorized it in 2008.



Geo-cell installation for soil erosion control.
Photo: Pennsylvania State University.

In 1987 Congress amended the Clean Water Act to establish the Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management Program because it recognized the need for increased federal leadership to help states develop innovative nonpoint source pollution control strategies. Under Section 319, states and Tribes receive grant money to support a variety of activities to reduce nonpoint source pollution, including technical assistance, financial support, education, training, technology transfer, demonstration projects, and monitoring. As a result of efforts under this program, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has documented success in restoring waterbodies in the Great Lakes states and across the nation (www.epa.gov/owow/nps/Success319).

Great Lakes Commission Requests to Congress

The Great Lakes Commission requests congressional support for the following priorities to continue efforts to prevent and control nonpoint source pollution in the Great Lakes basin:

- **Provide \$5 million for the Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control** to support locally-sponsored projects that prevent and control nonpoint source pollution.
- **Provide \$82 million to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency** to pass through to the Great Lakes States under the Section 319 watershed restoration program.

Funding History

Nonpoint Source Pollution Priority	Fiscal Year Funding (millions of dollars)					
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009 ¹	GLC Request
Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control	\$2.49	\$2.49	\$0	\$0.43	TBD	\$5 .00
Clean Water Act Section 319 Program ²	\$207.3	\$204.3	\$199.3	\$200.9	TBD	\$82

¹Appropriations for FY2009 are under a continuing resolution until March 6, 2009; final appropriations bills have not been passed.

²The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency awards Section 319 funds to states in accordance with a state-by-state allocation formula developed in consultation with states. The Great Lakes Commission request reflects only the amount to be distributed to the eight Great Lakes states.

Committee Jurisdiction

Nonpoint Source Pollution Priority	Committee Jurisdiction
Great Lakes Basin Program on Soil Erosion and Sediment Control	House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Senate Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Clean Water Act Section 319 Program	House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Environment and Related Agencies Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies

Progress to Date

The Great Lakes Basin Program has demonstrated its ability to protect and improve Great Lakes water quality by reducing soil erosion and controlling sedimentation. Since its inception in 1991, the program has provided nearly \$16 million to local units of governments and nonprofit organizations, such as conservation districts and watershed councils, to fund more than 400 locally-led water quality improvement projects. As of September 2008 the program has prevented an estimated 2 million tons of soil and 3,200 tons of phosphorus from entering the Great Lakes.

The Clean Water Act Section 319 Program has contributed significantly to the restoration of waterbodies that have been impaired due to nonpoint source pollution. Each of the Great Lakes states has an active Section 319 program that distributes funding to projects across their state. These projects reduce pollution in runoff, increase awareness of nonpoint source pollution and support monitoring to track restoration progress. Section 319 has also helped leverage additional funds from other state and local programs targeted for watershed restoration, such as the Illinois Clean Lakes Program and Michigan's Clean Michigan Initiative environmental bond program.

Economic and Environmental Benefits

By effectively preventing nonpoint source pollution, these programs protect the water quality of the Great Lakes, mitigate the environmental and economic damages caused by nonpoint source pollution, and sustain the long-term productivity of the Great Lakes basin. The Brookings Institution has estimated that a 10-25 percent reduction in sedimentation in the Great Lakes basin would reduce drinking water treatment costs by \$3 million to \$7 million annually. Efforts to reduce nonpoint source pollution also contribute to the restoration of wetlands and tributaries that provide valuable habitat for fish and wildlife. Tourism activities that depend on these resources (such as boating, fishing, hunting and wildlife watching) generate over \$50 billion of economic activity annually and provide hundreds of thousands of jobs. Controlling nonpoint source pollution is a significant component of Great Lakes restoration.

More Information

Clean Water Act Section 319 Program: www.epa.gov/owow/nps/cwact.html

Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control: www.glc.org/basin