



Fulfilling the Promise for the Great Lakes: Advancing Great Lakes Restoration and Economic Revitalization

Great Lakes Commission Federal Priorities for FY 2011

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The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative: Starting the Journey

2009 marked a “watershed” year for the Great Lakes when President Obama proposed – and Congress approved funding for – the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), an unprecedented, multi-year program to restore the Great Lakes. With funding of \$475 million for the Initiative’s first year, the Great Lakes region is taking a significant step toward a cleaner environment and a healthier economy. The Administration has proposed \$300 million for FY 2011.

The GLRI will help implement the comprehensive restoration strategy developed under the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration, which projected a \$20 billion cost for cleaning up the Great Lakes. If fully funded over its five-year timeframe, the GLRI, coupled with other critical programs, will help fulfill the promise of this regional strategy and accelerate on-the-ground action to restore the Great Lakes.

Targeting Critical Problems Facing the Great Lakes

The GLRI is designed to strategically target critical problems facing the Great Lakes by:

- *Shutting the door on aquatic invasive species*
- *Cleaning up contaminated sediments under the Great Lakes Legacy Act*
- *Controlling polluted runoff and cleaning up beach pollution*
- *Restoring degraded wetlands*
- *Conserving and enhancing valuable fish and wildlife resources*

With leadership from the Environmental Protection Agency, the Initiative involves multiple federal agencies and leverages contributions and expertise from state, local and nongovernmental partners. It is guided by a five-year action plan that sets outcome-oriented performance goals, criteria for measuring progress, and clear standards of accountability. The GLRI seeks to address the most *urgent* problems facing the Great Lakes. Congress was clear in FY 2010 that the Initiative is intended to supplement, *but not supplant*, base funding for regional and national programs.

A Wise Investment in a Brighter Future for Our Region

The Great Lakes are a national treasure and a vital economic asset. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is a wise investment for the nation and the 32 million Americans who live in the Great Lakes region. The Initiative advances our broader strategy to create jobs, stimulate economic development and invest in freshwater resources that are a critical component of our regional economic infrastructure.

Regional Priorities for the Great Lakes

On behalf of its eight member states, the Great Lakes Commission thanks Congress and the Administration for funding the first year of the GLRI. We are off to a strong start. The GLRI is designed as a five-year program, however, and we urge Congress to maintain or increase funding in FY 2011 to sustain our momentum, build on past investments and ensure the Initiative’s long term success. In addition, we urge Congress to support other regional priorities that are not addressed by the GLRI.

The GLRI’s five focus areas are described in detail along with our other top regional priorities, followed by our recommendations for support to core federal programs for the Great Lakes. The Commission endorses the priorities of the Great Lakes governors. Our priorities complement the governors’ and are supported by other regional organizations.

TOP REGIONAL PRIORITIES FOR THE GREAT LAKES

Maintain or increase funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

Protect water quality through the Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water Revolving Funds

Establish strong protections against aquatic invasive species

Strengthen regional coordination and federal-state collaboration

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Top Regional Priorities for the Great Lakes



Maintain or Increase Funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

The GLRI seeks to strategically complement existing federal programs and strengthen collaboration with state, local and nongovernmental partners. It is directed at solving problems in five key areas (described in detail below). It will be led by the U.S. EPA and coordinated through the Great Lakes Interagency Task Force, which is working to improve coordination of federal programs. The Task Force will implement an accountability system that tracks and reports progress in achieving objectives in the action plan. The GLRI will engage an independent scientific review panel to ensure the best available science is used to guide Great Lakes restoration efforts. The first year's funding of \$475 million for the GLRI is a solid down payment on the President's \$5 billion commitment to the Great Lakes. With the GLRI now underway, increased funding is needed to support large-scale restoration projects and to meet the President's \$5 billion commitment.

Request: Maintain or increase funding for the GLRI from the FY 2010 level of \$475 million.

Photo: Sand dunes on Lake Michigan, © flickr/sugarfrizz.



Protect Water Quality through the Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water Revolving Funds

Aging wastewater infrastructure allows the release of inadequately treated sewage into local waterways every year. Sewage discharges continue to close Great Lakes beaches, threaten public health, and damage local economies. Similarly, degraded drinking water infrastructure is a costly challenge for many communities. The Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) programs assist states and local communities in upgrading water infrastructure.

Request: Provide \$2.7 billion for the Clean Water SRF and \$1.4 billion for the Safe Drinking Water SRF for FY 2011. Additional funding should be included in any new job creation bills adopted by Congress.

Photo: Sewer pipe, © James McQuillan.

GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITIATIVE: Strategically Targeting Critical Great Lakes Problems

Cleaning Up Toxic Substances and Restoring Degraded Areas of Concern



Despite significant progress since the 1970s, the Great Lakes suffer from a legacy of pollution that continues to poison fish, threaten drinking water and hamper waterfront development. The most contaminated portions of the Great Lakes – the “Areas of Concern” designated under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement – are undergoing costly cleanups to remove toxic sediments and other pollution. The GLRI funds the highly successful Great Lakes Legacy Act that removes toxic pollution and cleans up Areas of Concern. It will also work to virtually eliminate the continued release of toxic substances, including new chemicals of concern. These activities will help safeguard human health, restore fish and wildlife resources, and facilitate economic growth in waterfront areas. *Photo: Kalamazoo River, Plainwell Impoundment, Michigan © U.S. EPA.*

Stopping the Introduction and Spread of Aquatic Invasive Species



More than 180 non-native species have invaded the Great Lakes, damaging water-dependent industries, threatening valuable fish and wildlife resources, and costing the region an estimated \$5.7 billion annually. The region must remain vigilant to prevent new invasive species from entering the Great Lakes and causing long-term, irreversible damage. The GLRI supports efforts to stop the introduction of non-native species by developing ballast water treatment technologies, strengthening prevention and control programs, and improving capacity for early detection and rapid response. The imminent threat of Asian carp devastating the region's \$7 billion sport fishing industry underscores the urgent need for action to safeguard the Great Lakes against the threat from aquatic invasive species. *Photo: Zebra mussel cluster, © D. Jude, NOAA Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory.*

Establish Strong Protections Against Aquatic Invasive Species

Congress needs to strengthen federal laws to ensure the long-term protection of the Great Lakes – and other regions of the country – against invasions by harmful, non-native species. Immediate federal support is needed to bolster early detection and rapid response capabilities, particularly to guard against the imminent threat from Asian carp. Funding is needed to enhance monitoring efforts – including DNA, electro fishing and netting techniques – around Chicago to determine if carp are in, or near, Lake Michigan and to facilitate emergency response actions to eradicate small populations before they grow and spread. Congress should provide full funding for and direct the Army Corps of Engineers to 1) complete the electric barrier on the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal as soon as possible; 2) expedite the study of options for separating the Great Lakes and Mississippi River watersheds in northeast Illinois; 3) take action to prevent flooding between the two watersheds; and 4) take additional actions as necessary to prevent any further encroachment of carp toward Lake Michigan. In addition, the Commission remains concerned about the introduction and spread of invasive species via ballast water and urges Congress and the Administration to implement an effective federal regulatory program. Legislation is needed to prevent the introduction and spread of harmful species via the trade in live organisms and other vectors. Congress should provide full funding for the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's successful sea lamprey control program and state and regional programs under the National Invasive Species Act.

Request: Provide funding for increased monitoring and response actions and expedite efforts to prevent Asian carp from entering the Great Lakes. Pass legislation to guard against all sources of invasive species. Fully fund the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's sea lamprey control program.

Photo: Asian carp. © Jason L. Jenkins.



Strengthen Regional Coordination and Federal-State Collaboration

Congressional action is needed to reauthorize EPA's Great Lakes Program and authorize the GLRI, with provisions that strengthen accountability, bolster coordination with Canada and the Great Lakes states, and ensure a strong scientific foundation to support future Great Lakes restoration.

Request: Reauthorize EPA's Great Lakes Program and authorize the GLRI, ensuring strong roles for states and stakeholders.



Improving Nearshore Health and Reducing Nonpoint Source Pollution



Degraded water quality is a persistent problem in coastal and nearshore areas. Bacterial contamination closes beaches and threatens public health; sedimentation clogs harbors and damages fishery resources; and disease outbreaks threaten valuable wildlife. Because of its diffuse nature, nonpoint source pollution is particularly challenging. The GLRI will increase support for successful on-the-ground solutions to reduce and prevent nonpoint source pollution, help ensure the safety of beaches, and protect the health of coastal areas in the Great Lakes. Photo: Sediment plume from the Maumee River into Lake Erie, © NASA Landsat Program.

Restoring and Protecting Valuable Fish and Wildlife Resources



Boating, fishing, hunting and wildlife watching generate over \$50 billion annually and support hundreds of thousands of jobs in the Great Lakes region. Unfortunately, the fish and wildlife resources that support these activities are threatened by degraded habitat; competition from invasive species; restrictions on natural water flows; toxic pollution; and other stressors. The GLRI directs funds to important programs that restore and protect critical habitat for fish and wildlife in the Great Lakes, such as coastal wetlands, rivers and streams, and fish spawning areas. The Initiative will advance the recovery of endangered species, remove barriers that restrict the natural migration of fish, and enhance habitat for migratory birds and other valuable wildlife.

Photo: Mallard duck in Lake Michigan, Chicago, Illinois, © flickr/Bala K.

Using Strong Science, Building Partnerships, Monitoring Progress, and Ensuring Accountability



The GLRI must be carefully coordinated, strategically targeted, and guided by sound science. An additional challenge is coordinating the multitude of federal, state and local agencies with management responsibility for the Great Lakes. The GLRI will improve scientific monitoring and assessment, and will strengthen communication and collaboration among agencies to ensure better coordination with existing restoration and conservation plans. Strong scientific oversight, rigorous reporting requirements and close consultation with the states will ensure accountability and maintain the GLRI's strategic focus.

Photo: Plankton survey in Lake Michigan, © NOAA Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory.

In addition to our top regional priorities, the Great Lakes Commission calls on Congress to support the following measures that are critical to the ecological and economic integrity of the region.

Additional Great Lakes Priorities



Reauthorize the Great Lakes Legacy Act

Congress should reauthorize the Great Lakes Legacy Act to increase its authorized funding level to \$150 million annually and improve the effectiveness of this critical program for cleaning up toxic sediments in the Great Lakes.

Request: Reauthorize and strengthen the Great Lakes Legacy Act.

Photo credit: Dredging Leland Harbor, Leelanau, Mich., © flickr/farlane.



Infrastructure for Commercial Navigation and Recreational Boating

Reduced funding for dredging, lower water levels in the lakes, diminishing options for disposing of dredged material and aging navigation infrastructure threaten the economic viability of one of our country's major marine transportation systems.

Request: Provide funding to the Army Corps of Engineers for the Sault Ste. Marie lock expansion program and for the Great Lakes Navigation Operations and Maintenance budget to dredge commercial and recreational harbors.

Photo credit: Roger Blough, Great Lakes Fleet, © Al Ballert, Great Lakes Commission.

Core Programs for the Great Lakes

Congress has been clear that GLRI funding is intended to be in addition to base funding for many essential programs. The Great Lakes Commission urges Congress to support core programs that contribute to the restoration, protection and effective management of the Great Lakes. Examples of important core programs include, but are not limited to, the following:

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Great Lakes Basin Program for
Soil Erosion and Sediment Control

Natural Resources Conservation Service,
Farm Service Agency and U.S. Forest Service
conservation programs

Department of the Interior

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Aquatic Invasive Species Program
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act
U.S. Geological Survey, Great Lakes Science Center
U.S. Geological Survey, National Streamflow Information Program

Department of State

Great Lakes Fishery Commission, sea lamprey control program
International Joint Commission, U.S. Section

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act Grants
Clean Water Act Section 319 Watershed Restoration Program
Great Lakes Air Deposition Program
Great Lakes National Program Office
Office of Research and Development
labs in Duluth, Minn. and Grosse Ile, Mich.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Center for Sponsored Coastal and Ocean Research
Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program
Coastal Zone Management Act Grants
Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory
Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Program
Integrated Ocean Observing System, Great Lakes Observing System
National Sea Grant College Program

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Great Lakes Fishery and Ecosystem Restoration Program
Great Lakes Navigation Operations and Maintenance
Great Lakes Recreational Harbors Dredging
Great Lakes Remedial Action Plan Program
Sault Ste. Marie Lock Expansion Program

About the Great Lakes Commission

The Great Lakes Commission was established by the Great Lakes states in 1955 to coordinate management of the water resources of the Great Lakes basin and to represent the states' interests on Great Lakes matters before the federal government. Based in Ann Arbor, Mich., the Commission promotes the concept that a healthy environment and prosperous economy should be mutually dependent, not exclusive, goals. With appointees from the eight states, the Commission serves as a forum for the development of regional policy and as an advocate for legislation and programs to benefit the Great Lakes. The Canadian provinces of Ontario and Québec participate in all Commission deliberations and activities as associate members.

Front page photo: Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, Lake Michigan, © Jessica Reeder.



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