



# PRIORITIES FOR ADVANCING **Great Lakes Restoration** AND **Economic Revitalization**

GREAT LAKES COMMISSION FEDERAL PRIORITIES FOR FY 2012 • MARCH 2011

## The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative: Revitalizing a Vital Regional Asset

On behalf of the eight Great Lakes states, we thank Congress – and the Great Lakes Congressional Delegation in particular – for supporting the first two years of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). The GLRI is supporting implementation of a comprehensive, bipartisan restoration strategy that is broadly endorsed by the Great Lakes states, cities, tribes, conservation groups, and business and industry. We are midway through an unprecedented restoration program for our region's most valuable natural resource and the core of our regional identity.

The Great Lakes are a national treasure and a vital economic asset for our eight-state region. Restoring and leveraging the lakes advances our broader strategy to create jobs, stimulate economic development and invest in freshwater resources and waterfront communities. Sustaining Great Lakes restoration through continued implementation of the GLRI is a wise investment for our nation and for the 32 million Americans who live in the Great Lakes region. Fully implementing our Great Lakes restoration strategy is projected to generate \$50 billion in long-term economic benefits.

***The Great Lakes region is united in urging Congress to sustain the progress we are making by maintaining funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in FY 2012.***

## Strategically Targeting Serious Problems in the Great Lakes

By building on a set of priorities defined by the Great Lakes' governors and a regional restoration strategy completed in 2005, the GLRI is directly addressing the most serious problems facing the Great Lakes by

- Shutting the door on aquatic invasive species, such as Asian carp
- 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

The GLRI is guided by sound science and a detailed Action Plan with clear performance measures and accountability standards. A majority of funding is being directed to states, cities and nongovernmental groups that are best equipped to address local restoration priorities. The Initiative emphasizes on-the-ground actions, with nearly 300 restoration projects already underway.

## Strengthening the Federal-State Partnership

The Great Lakes region is partnering closely with the federal government to restore the Great Lakes. Despite severe fiscal constraints, states, cities, tribes and nongovernmental groups have built the capacity to implement the GLRI and translate regional goals into site-specific actions that generate real benefits for local communities. An unprecedented effort has been invested by the eight Great Lakes states to launch the GLRI and their role should be elevated in future implementation efforts.

## Regional Priorities for the Great Lakes

With support from Congress and the Administration, Great Lakes restoration is now underway! The Great Lakes Commission urges Congress to maintain funding for the GLRI in FY 2012 to sustain our momentum, build on past investments and ensure the Initiative's long-term success. The GLRI is structured as a five-year, \$2.2 billion program. We ask Congress to continue funding in FY 2012 to keep the Initiative on track. We also ask Congress to direct the Administration to strengthen collaboration with the states and give them greater authority over how the GLRI is implemented. The states know best what needs to be done; elevating their role will reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and ensure resources are directed at the most important priorities in shoreline communities.

In addition, we urge Congress to support other regional priorities that are vital for the health and economic vitality of our region, but are not addressed by the GLRI, such as funding for clean water infrastructure. The Commission also calls on Congress to maintain support for core federal programs that enable us to effectively manage the Great Lakes.

### TOP REGIONAL PRIORITIES FOR THE GREAT LAKES

- Maintain funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in FY 2012
- Give the Great Lakes states greater authority over how the GLRI is implemented
- Protect water quality through the Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water Revolving Funds
- Establish strong protections against Asian carp and other aquatic invasive species

# TOP REGIONAL PRIORITIES FOR THE GREAT LAKES

## Maintain Funding to Restore a National Treasure

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is being led by U.S. EPA and managed by a federal Interagency Task Force, formed in 2004 to improve coordination of federal programs directed at the Great Lakes. It is implementing a comprehensive cleanup strategy developed in 2005 and based on priorities established by the Great Lakes governors. Restoring the Great Lakes is a longstanding priority for our region. Regional leaders – including the governors, state agencies, tribes, cities and nongovernmental groups – have worked with Congress and federal agencies for more than a decade to launch an action-oriented program to address the most serious problems facing the lakes. The GLRI is the culmination of this work and is now well underway, putting people to work and restoring a vital resource for our region. Congress provided \$475 million for the GLRI in FY 2010. The President's budget requested \$300 million for FY 2011 and \$350 million for FY 2012.

**REQUEST:** Maintain funding for the GLRI in FY 2012 so our region can sustain progress in the multi-year effort to restore this national treasure and leverage its benefits to create jobs, stimulate economic development and revitalize our regional and national economy.

## Give the Great Lakes States Greater Authority to Implement the GLRI

The eight Great Lakes states are on the “front line” in implementing the GLRI and making it a success. They know what the most important restoration priorities are and can direct resources to them efficiently. They can also coordinate with state and local economic development efforts to maximize long-term economic benefits from the program. It is critical that U.S. EPA and other federal agencies collaborate with the states and give them a leading role in guiding and implementing the GLRI. The current “top-down” approach is inefficient and is creating unnecessary administrative burdens. In addition, some activities being supported under the GLRI, while useful, may not be the best use of this funding. The top priority for the states is on-the-ground actions that enhance the Great Lakes as a resource for local communities.

**REQUEST:** Direct U.S. EPA to strengthen coordination with the states and give them greater authority over how the GLRI is implemented. Reduce unnecessary administrative burdens, streamline and coordinate multiple federal programs, provide maximum flexibility to meet match requirements and focus on actions that produce on-the-ground results for local communities.

## Protect Water Quality Through Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water Infrastructure

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 funding for the Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water SRFs in FY 2012.

## Establish Strong Protections Against Aquatic Invasive Species Such as Asian Carp

Federal action is needed to protect the Great Lakes – and other regions of the country – against invasions by harmful, non-native species, including Asian carp. Congress should maintain funding for the GLRI and base agency programs to ensure full implementation of the *Asian Carp Control Strategy Framework* and other prevention and control measures to guard against the imminent threat from Asian carp. The Army Corps of Engineers should expedite the study of options for separating the Great Lakes and Mississippi River watersheds. In addition, the Commission urges Congress and the Administration to implement an effective federal ballast water management program that harmonizes U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. EPA and state regulations and prevents the introduction of invasive species via ballast water. Legislation is also needed to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive 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.

**REQUEST:** Provide funding to expedite efforts to prevent Asian carp from entering the Great Lakes. Provide support for effective invasive species prevention programs.





# Year One of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative: **ACHIEVING ON-THE-GROUND RESULTS**



## 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 U.S.-Canada Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement – are undergoing costly cleanups to remove toxic sediments and other pollution. The first year of funding for the GLRI is supporting projects that

- Clean up degraded Areas of Concern to restore beneficial uses and facilitate development in waterfront areas
- Remove toxic pollution that threatens human health and taints fish and wildlife
- Assess the effects of toxic substances and the pathways through which they continue to enter the Great Lakes
- Eliminate the continued release of toxic substances into our air and water



## 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 is providing support to programs and projects that

- Develop effective ballast water treatment technologies to shut down this primary pathway for invasive species entering the Great Lakes
- Prevent the introduction and control the spread of harmful species, such as Asian carp, sea lamprey and phragmites (an invasive reed)
- Build capacity to respond quickly and effectively to new invasions



## 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 is increasing support for successful programs and projects that

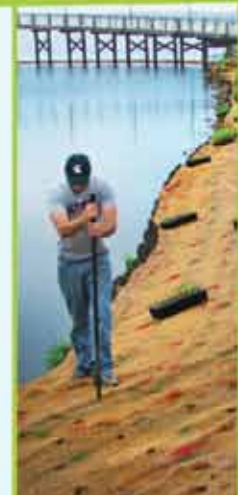
- Reduce and prevent nonpoint source pollution
- Develop pollution control plans for impaired watersheds
- Implement best management practices to improve water quality
- Ensure the safety of beaches and waterways for drinking, swimming, fishing and other uses
- Reduce toxic air pollutants entering waterways



## 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, 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 is directing funds to projects that

- Restore and protect critical habitat for fish and wildlife, such as coastal wetlands, rivers and streams
- Map and monitor high-priority habitat areas
- Rehabilitate degraded habitat for valuable fish and wildlife in “toxic hotspots” – or Areas of Concern



# ADDITIONAL Great Lakes Priorities



The GLRI targets many of the key problems facing the Great Lakes. However, there are additional priorities, not addressed by the Initiative, that are critical to the ecological and economic integrity of the region.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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:

### 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

### Environmental Protection Agency

BEACH 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.*

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