



Adopted Sept. 30, 2014

Establishing *Blue Accounting*: A collaborative re-engineering of Great Lakes information strategy and delivery

Whereas, the water resources of the Great Lakes region support a vibrant economy, exceptional ecosystem and rich quality of life; and

Whereas, for the region to continue to realize its competitive edge in North America and globally, the true value of water must be realized – and then sustained – through strategic investments to achieve priority water resource outcomes; and

Whereas, strategic development and delivery of information and knowledge will play a key role in our understanding and claiming of regional water values; and

Whereas, for decades we have monitored aspects of the Great Lakes water system itself (stream flow, and stream and lake water quality) but we do not have a coordinated system of data, information and knowledge to support decisions; and

Whereas, critical concepts and technologies supporting the linkage between information systems and decisionmaking across large regions have also been developing in the Great Lakes region, including the Great Lakes Aquatic Habitat Framework, Great Lakes Observing System and the Great Lakes Information Management and Delivery System; and

Whereas, better accounting of our municipal water resources could have provided vital information to anticipate or prevent and, subsequently, assist with response efforts related to the recent drinking water crisis in Toledo, Ohio (Aug. 2-4, 2014) caused by the toxin microcystin breaching water intakes due to the persistence of harmful algal blooms in western Lake Erie; and

Whereas, the Great Lakes Commission is charged by the region’s governors and premiers to “promote the orderly, integrated, and comprehensive development, use and conservation of the water resources of the Great Lakes basin” and created and manages the Great Lakes Information Network, the only online clearinghouse of its kind serving the region; and

Whereas, in 2013 the Great Lakes governors and premier of Ontario charged the Great Lakes Commission to provide recommendations on a comprehensive and effective vision for regional water monitoring and reporting; and

Whereas, with guidance from a collaborative workgroup, the Great Lakes Commission provided this vision in the report, *Great Lakes Blue Accounting: Empowering Decisions to Realize Regional Water Values*, in March 2014; and

Whereas, the Blue Accounting report lays out a strategy for revolutionizing the way information about water resources is designed, organized, managed, delivered, financed and governed in the Great Lakes region; and

Whereas, the Blue Accounting vision provides a tactical opportunity to re-engineer GLIN, both strategically and structurally, and enhance its capacity as the information hub for the entire Great Lakes community; and

Whereas, the governors and premiers provided enthusiastic feedback to the Blue Accounting plan in April 2014 and encouraged the Great Lakes Commission and its collaborators to move forward with its implementation.

Therefore, Be It Resolved, the Great Lakes Commission will collaborate with partners to begin refining and implementing the Blue Accounting framework including acquiring additional resources in-house and with partners; and

Be it Further Resolved, the Great Lakes Commission will help to catalyze implementation of the Blue Accounting initiative, redesign of GLIN, and establishment of a progressive framework for greatly improved orderly, integrated and comprehensive information systems in support of basin-level water resources management; and

Be It Further Resolved, the Great Lakes Commission calls on regional information providers to join with the Commission in helping to clarify and harmonize the roles of the primary, regional data/information portals; and

Be It Further Resolved, the Great Lakes Commission urges partners to work collaboratively to conduct one or more pilots of the Blue Accounting framework; one around municipal water services (safe drinking water, runoff and waste treatment) and that factors leading to the Toledo water crisis be used to guide planning in the development of the pilot; and others within the desired outcomes of healthy aquatic ecosystems; and

Be it Finally Resolved, the Great Lakes Commission calls on regional collaborators and funders to help by openly sharing data in order to lead to smarter information systems and knowledge to support decisions by individuals, governments and corporations to correct mistakes, prevent future problems, and maximize the environmental, economic and social benefits that our water resources provide.