



Adopted March 5, 2014

Sustaining progress under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in fiscal years 2015-19

Whereas, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River are national treasures and environmental and economic assets of vital importance to the eight Great Lakes states, the provinces of Ontario and Québec, and the United States and Canada as a whole; and

Whereas, 36 million Americans and Canadians depend on the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin for drinking water, recreation, fish and wildlife resources, power generation and commercial navigation, among other benefits; and

Whereas, benefits from the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin continue to be threatened by the release of untreated sewage, invasive species, toxic contaminants, deteriorating water infrastructure, inadequately maintained ports and harbors, and declining water levels due to climate change and other causes; and

Whereas, with leadership from the president and bipartisan support from Congress, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) has supported a targeted, regional effort to address critical problems facing the Great Lakes since its inception in 2009; and

Whereas, the GLRI is making significant progress, with over 2,000 restoration projects implemented to clean up degraded coastal areas, halt Asian carp and other invasive species, and prevent polluted runoff that closes beaches and causes harmful algal blooms, with notable results including increased state capacity to support Great Lakes restoration efforts, removal of 46 beneficial use impairments and completion of cleanup work in six Areas of Concern, and initiation of 50 projects remediating over 11 million cubic yards of contaminated sediments; and

Whereas, funding provided by Congress to date for the GLRI has been below the amount projected to ensure its completion within the original five-year timeframe (\$2.2 billion) and ecosystem outcomes from the restoration program likely will not become fully apparent for some years after its implementation; and

Whereas, the Great Lakes region – including states, cities, tribes, business and industry, and nongovernmental groups – have invested significant time and resources to build the capacity to implement the GLRI and translate regional restoration goals into site-specific actions that benefit local communities; and

Whereas, U.S. EPA, along with other federal agencies, is updating the GLRI Action Plan to strengthen and guide the program through an extended implementation period from FY 2015-19; and

Whereas, in July 2013 the Great Lakes Commission presented U.S. EPA and its partner agencies with recommendations on updating the GLRI Action Plan and strengthening program implementation through FY 2019 with a request for improved coordination and communication to facilitate consistent, ongoing and open dialogue as the GLRI enters its next phase; and

Whereas, a November 2013 Government Accountability Office report found no significant deficiencies with the GLRI program and recommended that U.S. EPA strengthen the program's measures of progress and address issues outside its current scope, such as climate change and failing wastewater infrastructure; and

Whereas, in December 2013 the Great Lakes Advisory Board released its *Recommendations to the Great Lakes Interagency Task Force on the Development of the FY2015-2019 Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Action Plan* that included encouraging continued investment in on-the-ground and in-the-water activities that advance restoration, protection, prevention, sustainability and resilience to climate change.

Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission calls on U.S. EPA to complete an update of the GLRI Action Plan for fiscal years 2015-19 that will guide the restoration program over the next five years, with strengthened performance measures and reporting to better track progress, and actions to account for challenges that could have a material effect on the success of the GLRI, such as climate change; and

Be It Further Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission calls on U.S. EPA to carry out this update in close consultation with the Great Lakes states, the Great Lakes Congressional Delegation and other regional partners, with consideration given to recommendations from the Great Lakes Commission, the Great Lakes Advisory Board, the Government Accountability Office, and other partners; and

Be It Further Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission calls on Congress to continue funding for the GLRI through Fiscal Year 2019 to maintain the momentum underway, build on investments made by the Great Lakes states and other partners, and facilitate the long-term success of the regional restoration program; and

Be It Finally Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission commends U.S. EPA and the other federal agencies, along with state agencies and countless local partners, for their dedication and hard work in implementing the GLRI and urges continued collaboration with the Great Lakes states to sustain its effectiveness.