



RESOLUTION
Adopted February 24, 2016

Embracing Great Lakes priorities in 2016 presidential campaign platforms

Whereas, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River contain 95 percent of our nation's fresh surface water and are a national treasure and an environmental and economic asset of vital importance to the eight Great Lakes states, two provinces and the North American economy; and

Whereas, more than 48 million Americans and Canadians depend on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River for drinking water, recreation, manufacturing of products, power generation, commercial fishing and maritime navigation, among other benefits; and

Whereas, the Great Lakes fuel our regional economy, generating more than 1.5 million jobs and \$62 billion in wages annually, and providing an efficient maritime transportation network that connects 140 ports and harbors and links our industrial heartland with world markets, contributing more than \$30 billion to the U.S. and Canadian economies; and

Whereas, the Great Lakes are the foundation of our region's outdoor recreation economy, with more than 4 million recreational boats registered in the eight Great Lakes states generating nearly \$16 billion in spending annually, and more than 12 million anglers and hunters spending \$24 billion annually; and

Whereas, these benefits from the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River could be enhanced by addressing ongoing problems that include deteriorating water and navigation infrastructure, inadequately maintained ports and harbors, the release of untreated sewage, invasive species, toxic contaminants, nutrient pollution, and degraded and under-utilized waterfront areas; and

Whereas, restoring, enhancing and caring for the Great Lakes is a longstanding and bipartisan priority for federal, state and local leaders in the region, with our current restoration strategy guided by priorities established by the region's governors and developed by more than 1,500 stakeholders across the eight-state region; and

Whereas, the past two presidents and their administrations have made Great Lakes restoration a national priority and have provided critical leadership in developing and implementing our regional restoration strategy; and

Whereas, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), begun in 2010, is supporting an unprecedented partnership with the Great Lakes states and other partners that has enjoyed enthusiastic and bipartisan support among Great Lakes leaders, regional organizations and the Great Lakes congressional delegation;

Whereas, the GLRI is strategically targeting the most critical problems facing the Great Lakes, with more than 2,900 projects implemented to clean up heavily degraded Areas of Concern, control Asian carp and other invasive species, prevent polluted runoff that causes toxic algae, and restore habitat for valuable fish and wildlife resources; and

Whereas, additional challenges and opportunities exist to repair and upgrade infrastructure to safeguard drinking water, and enhance maritime commerce through a new strategy being developed by our region's governors and premiers.

Adopted at the 2016 Semiannual Meeting of the Great Lakes Commission, February 23-24, 2016 in Washington, D.C.

Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission calls on the 2016 presidential candidates to recognize the Great Lakes as a national treasure and a vital asset for the environmental health, cultural richness and economic prosperity of the eight-state Great Lakes region; and

Be It Further Resolved, that the Commission calls on the 2016 presidential candidates to embrace and sustain the GLRI and associated Great Lakes restoration and protection efforts as a key component of our region's broader strategy to create jobs, stimulate economic development, strengthen waterfront communities and sustain a vibrant regional economy; and

Be It Further Resolved, that the Commission highlights the following Great Lakes priorities and urges the 2016 presidential candidates to address them in their platforms and – if elected – advance them as policy and funding priorities of their administration:

- Sustaining funding for the GLRI to achieve the goals outlined in our Great Lakes restoration strategy and adapting it and related programs to focus on the most critical challenges facing the lakes;
- Reducing nutrient pollution that causes harmful algal blooms and threatens drinking water supplies;
- Recognizing aquatic invasive species as a national problem with regional significance by promoting programs to prevent the introduction of new species and controlling those already present;
- Investing in water infrastructure to safeguard drinking water and prevent the release of sewage and polluted stormwater that closes beaches, threatens public health and damages local economies;
- Strengthening the Great Lakes navigation system by upgrading locks, ports, harbors and related infrastructure;
- Supporting healthy fish and wildlife populations to maintain ecological diversity and strengthen economic benefits from fishing, hunting and wildlife watching; and
- Helping local communities revitalize waterfront areas, leverage the value of water resources and adapt to impacts from climate change; and

Be It Finally Resolved, that the Commission calls on the next president to collaborate closely with the government of Canada, the provinces of Ontario and Quebec and the Great Lakes states and build on the leadership of Canada, the premiers and the governors to sustain current successful efforts, shape future priorities, and direct federal programs and investments to align with binational, state, provincial and local efforts to advance common goals for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.