Great Lakes Commission
des Grands Lacs

RESOLUTION
Adopted September 29, 2015

Healing the fractured urban water cycle through integrated water management

Whereas, water management across the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River region is often characterized by aging water and wastewater infrastructure that can pose a risk to a healthy and safe water supply and to thriving economies, animal and plant communities that symbolize and depend on this freshwater treasure; and

Whereas, in many urban areas, the natural hydrological cycle that provides services such as flood control, aquifer recharge, water treatment, and clean and reliable water supply has been fractured by a legacy of poor land use planning, wasteful water use, and a disjointed approach to water management generally; and

Whereas, in the Great Lakes region, municipalities have primary responsibility for water supply, wastewater management and stormwater management and these programs are often fractured within local government institutions; and

Whereas, federal, provincial and state agencies in the U.S. and Canada provide policy guidelines and funding to support municipal efforts to manage water supply, wastewater and stormwater; and

Whereas, integrated water resource management—which joins decisionmaking related to water supply, water use, wastewater treatment and disposal and stormwater management—can help to restore the fractured water cycle and improve the efficiency of programs to enhance the quality and quantity of services provided by this freshwater treasure; and

Whereas, water efficiency and green infrastructure are also core aspects of municipal infrastructure and can augment the economic, environmental and social outcomes of integrated water management; and

Whereas, through the Greater Lakes project, which was supported by the Great Lakes Protection Fund, the Great Lakes Commission has learned that there is broad agreement among municipal, provincial and state experts on the need to integrate water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure on a watershed basis; and

Whereas, the full benefits of integrated water management can be boosted by stronger partnerships with federal, state and provincial governments that will inform, educate and improve local decisionmaking.

Therefore, be it resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission calls for U.S. and Canadian federal, state and provincial agencies with responsibilities related to water supply, wastewater management and stormwater management to work with municipalities to develop and promote principles of integrated water resource management for application within the Great Lakes region; and

Be it further resolved, that federal agencies in the U.S. and Canada, in partnership with states and provinces, where appropriate, utilize funding incentives, such as low cost/low interest loan programs, that will encourage local units of government with direct responsibility for water infrastructure improvements to apply the principles of integrated water resources management that includes measures for water efficiency and green infrastructure; and

Be it further resolved, that Great Lakes states and provinces, where appropriate, should pursue enhanced coordination among their respective agencies with responsibilities related to water supply, wastewater management and stormwater management; including integration of programs when working with municipalities; and

Be it finally resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission should explore the establishment of a project and/or working group with municipalities, other agencies and landowners to:

- identify and promote sustainable water use and management policies, programs and practices;
- recommend and establish reliable long-term funding to design, build, operate and maintain water infrastructure and to ensure that these funding mechanisms include water conservation/efficiency and green infrastructure as core components of the infrastructure mechanisms;
- explore and advance the establishment of an information platform to enhance the development of shared goals and metrics for sustainable water supply; and
- explore and advance regulatory and non-regulatory approaches to advance integrated water management on a watershed basis, including market-based and other cost-effective incentives.