



Adopted Sept. 9, 2013

Priorities for the Great Lakes navigation system in the federal Water Resources Development Act

Whereas, there are 140 federally authorized ports and harbors in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River navigation system, 60 classified as deep draft commercial and 80 as shallow draft recreational; and

Whereas, some 3.3 million cubic yards of sediment accumulate in U.S. Great Lakes ports, harbors and navigation channels annually that, if not dredged, can impede commercial and recreational navigation, cause economic hardship, and increase risks to human health and safety; and

Whereas, current criteria required by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for inclusion in its Great Lakes Navigation Operations and Maintenance (O&M) budget includes, for commercial deep draft ports, a minimum annual cargo tonnage throughput of 1 million tons; and

Whereas, all shallow draft, exclusively recreational harbors are considered not consistent with O&M funding under current Administration policy and therefore are not included in the President's O&M budget; and

Whereas, the above criteria effectively make some 97 of the 140 U.S. federally authorized ports and harbors on the Great Lakes a low priority for USACE O&M funding; and

Whereas, an accumulated backlog of some 18 million cubic yards of sediment resulting from over a decade of Great Lakes O&M underfunding has negatively affected operations at nearly all Great Lakes ports and harbors, and now threatens closure of some ports and harbors that depend on safe, reliable navigation access but are unable to meet current criteria for federal maintenance dredging; and

Whereas, the dredging backlog is projected to grow to 21 million cubic yards by 2017; and

Whereas, the Army Corps of Engineers estimates that \$200 million is needed to address the dredging backlog and restore Great Lakes harbors and navigation channels to their authorized width and depth; and

Whereas, the past practice of seeking congressional adds, or "earmarks," for individual harbor maintenance projects is increasingly difficult; and

Whereas, Congress is developing Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) legislation that will significantly impact federal policies, programs and funding for commercial navigation and water infrastructure for years to come; and

Whereas, the Great Lakes governors and premiers recently called on both federal governments to authorize, manage and fund the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Navigation System as a single transportation system for the benefit of the entire region and the national economies of Canada and the United States.

Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission calls on the Great Lakes Congressional Delegation to ensure new WRDA legislation includes provisions that restore, maintain and strengthen the economic vitality of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Navigation System for commercial and recreational transportation and their contributions to our regional economy.

Be it Further Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission supports provisions in WRDA that accomplish the following:

- Reform the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) to ensure that all revenues collected are appropriated and directed to their intended purpose – maintaining our nation’s ports and associated infrastructure;
- Provide a dedicated funding authorization for maintaining and operating navigation infrastructure in the Great Lakes;
- Formally authorize the Great Lakes Navigation System as a single, integrated system and direct the Army Corps of Engineers to aggregate the system’s collective benefits when allocating resources for dredging and other needs; and
- Create a cost-share program for dredging recreational harbors.

Be it Finally Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission opposes provisions that put the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River region at a disadvantage, including expanding the authorized uses of HMTF revenues or establishing a prioritization scheme.