



Adopted March 6, 2013

Sustaining Environmental Restoration and Economic Revitalization: Great Lakes Commission Federal Priorities for 2013

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

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

Whereas, the Great Lakes region has united behind the *Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes*, a comprehensive restoration plan that is endorsed by the Great Lakes states, cities, industries, tribal governments and environmental organizations; and

Whereas, the Great Lakes states, Ontario and Québec have further demonstrated their long-term commitment to the Great Lakes by adopting the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact and Agreement to ensure that the quantity of our waters are managed for the well-being of future generations; and

Whereas, Congress and the Administration have supported an unprecedented partnership with the Great Lakes states and other partners to implement the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), which is strategically targeting the most critical problems facing the Great Lakes by:

- shutting the door on aquatic invasive species, such as Asian carp
- cleaning up contaminated sediments under the Great Lakes Legacy Act
- controlling polluted runoff and cleaning up beach pollution
- restoring degraded wetlands
- conserving and enhancing valuable fish and wildlife resources; 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 goals into site-specific actions that generate real benefits for local communities; and

Whereas, the Great Lakes states are critical partners in the success of the GLRI with the best knowledge and experience to ensure that resources are targeted at local priorities and several of the Great Lakes states have adopted Great Lakes restoration strategies and plans to complement federal restoration activities in their states; and

Whereas, 25 metropolitan Chambers of Commerce have identified the Great Lakes as a key element for advancing their *Agenda for Jobs and Economic Transformation in the Great Lakes Region*, underscoring the potential to leverage the Great Lakes to create jobs, stimulate economic development and profit from freshwater resources that will be central to the future of the nation and the eight-state Great Lakes region.

Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission endorses a suite of federal priorities for 2013, with a primary focus on:

- Sustaining progress under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative through continued funding and an extended timeframe for carrying out this complex regional restoration program
- Passing comprehensive Great Lakes legislation that formally authorizes the GLRI and reauthorizes several critical existing Great Lakes programs and strengthens coordination with regional stakeholders and binational cooperation with Canada
- Safeguarding the Great Lakes from aquatic invasive species by accelerating efforts to prevent the introduction of Asian carp, advancing options for separating the Great Lakes and Mississippi River watersheds, and enacting legislation to reform the federal Lacey Act to prevent the introduction of harmful species in trade
- Maintaining the viability of commercial navigation and recreational harbors in the Great Lakes by reforming the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund to ensure that monies collected are spent for their intended purpose – maintaining access to our region’s ports and harbors; and by providing funding to the Army Corps of Engineers for the Great Lakes Navigation Operations and Maintenance budget to dredge commercial and recreational harbors
- Developing new approaches to support dredging of recreational harbors and maintain recreational access to the Great Lakes, which is vital to the economic health of coastal communities
- Providing funding for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) to repair and enhance wastewater collection and treatment systems to prevent the release of nutrients that contribute to harmful algal blooms in the Great Lakes and support the Drinking Water SRF program
- Reauthorizing the Farm Bill with strong conservation provisions – including the Regional Conservation Partnership Program – that address soil and water conservation needs, reduce nutrients in priority watersheds and support sustainable agricultural practices; and
- Reauthorizing and providing funding for the Beach Act to sustain successful efforts to protect and improve nearshore water quality and reduce beach closings.

Be It Further Resolved, that the GLRI is intended to supplement, not supplant, base funding for Great Lakes programs and the Great Lakes Commission calls on Congress and the Administration to maintain funding for core programs; and

Be It Further Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission calls on Congress and the Administration to continue to strengthen collaboration with the eight Great Lakes states in the implementation of the GLRI, recognizing that elevating their role will improve administrative efficiency and ensure that resources are directed at the most important on-the-ground restoration priorities in shoreline communities; and

Be It Finally Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission calls on President Obama and Congress to sustain the progress being made in restoring the Great Lakes and leveraging them as an economic asset for the eight-state Great Lakes region by supporting these priorities together with core programs that provide for ongoing conservation and management of the Great Lakes.