

Adopted Sept. 11, 2012

## Resolution: Extending the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Beyond 2014

**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, Ontario, Québec and two nations; and

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

**Whereas**, priorities established in 2003 by the governors of the eight Great Lakes states provided the foundation on which the region came together to develop the *Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes*, a comprehensive restoration plan that has been broadly endorsed by the Great Lakes governors, states, cities, industries, tribal governments, federal agencies and environmental organizations; and

**Whereas**, with leadership from the President and bipartisan support from Congress, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) was initiated in 2009 as a five-year program with a budget of \$2.2 billion designed to strategically target the most critical problems facing the Great Lakes, including

- Toxic substances and Areas of Concern
- Invasive species
- Nearshore health and nonpoint source pollution
- Habitat and wildlife protection and restoration
- Accountability, education, monitoring, evaluation, communication, and partnerships; and

**Whereas**, the GLRI has established key components for an effective restoration program, including a detailed Action Plan with clear performance goals, an accountability system, and a funding plan that strategically aligns existing programs with those goals; 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**, in July 2012 the Great Lakes Commission presented to U.S. EPA several recommendations based on states' experiences to improve the effectiveness of the GLRI, and these recommendations include maintaining close coordination and consultation with states; maintaining noncompetitive funding to support state engagement; using a block grant or broad workplan approach to enable large-scale, multi-year grants; and streamlining the RFP, proposal review and quality assurance plan processes; and

**Whereas**, funding provided by Congress to date for the GLRI has been below the amount requested by the President and below the amount originally budgeted (\$2.2 billion); and

**Whereas**, the Great Lakes face significant and costly restoration needs, as documented in the *Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes*, which formed the basis for the GLRI and which identified a need for over \$20 billion in restoration funding (including investments in wastewater infrastructure); and

**Whereas**, funding for Great Lakes restoration is a wise investment in the region's economy that is already generating results and is projected to yield over \$50 billion in long-term economic benefits if fully implemented; and

**Whereas**, ecosystem outcomes from the restoration program likely will not become fully apparent for some years after its implementation; and

**Whereas**, these and other factors underscore the complexity of implementing a large-scale ecosystem restoration program that utilizes sound science and draws on the full array of programs, authorities and implementation capabilities among federal and state agencies, local jurisdictions and regional organizations.

**Therefore, Be It Resolved**, the Great Lakes Commission calls on Congress to continue funding for the GLRI beyond 2014 to maintain the momentum underway, build on investments made by the Great Lakes states and other partners, and to facilitate the long-term success of the regional restoration program; and

**Be It Further Resolved**, the Great Lakes Commission calls on U.S. EPA to develop an extended timeframe for the GLRI that incorporates a careful assessment of the program and modifications to improve its efficiency and effectiveness, including recommendations from the Science Advisory Board report on the GLRI Action Plan and recommendations submitted by the Great Lakes Commission in July 2012, and that this be done in close consultation with the Great Lakes states, the Great Lakes Congressional Delegation, and other regional partners; and

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