

Adopted Oct. 12, 2011

## Resolution: Nutrient Management in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin

**Whereas**, record hot temperatures and heavy spring rains in much of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin over the past two years, combined with the effects of nonpoint source runoff, invasive species and other potential contributing factors have created severe water quality problems in several areas of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin; and

**Whereas**, water quality problems stemming from both point and nonpoint sources of pollution is a major contributor to the degradation of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River ecosystem and other parts of North America, resulting in oxygen starved dead zones, excessive algal blooms and the closing of beaches due to high levels of bacteria; and

**Whereas**, Lake Erie's western and central basins in particular have been impacted by these problems; and

**Whereas**, in July 2011 HR 2484 (*the Harmful Algal Blooms and Hypoxia Research and Control Act of 2011*) was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives to provide programmatic support, funding and technical assistance to address and reduce algal blooms and oxygen starved dead zones nationwide; and

**Whereas**, phosphorus has been identified as the critical element and limiting factor in freshwater ecosystems which contributes to dead zones and unsightly algal blooms; and

**Whereas**, phosphorus is contained in some dishwashing detergents and household cleaning products and in animal wastes and commercial fertilizers that are applied to agricultural, urban and suburban lands throughout the basin; and

**Whereas**, point source contributions of phosphorus from wastewater treatment plants is still a concern in some areas of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin; and

**Whereas**, there is a need to better understand the relationship between total phosphorus loadings and levels and dissolved-reactive phosphorus loadings and levels especially since total lakewide phosphorus levels continue to decline in most of the Great Lakes; and

**Whereas**, the federal governments along with the states and provinces have many laws, regulations, programs and tools available to help landowners manage their lands sustainably and in a manner that can protect water resources; and

**Whereas**, the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River region has been at the center of many successful phosphorus related research, regulatory, outreach and education efforts dating back to the 1960s;

**Whereas**, education and outreach programs aimed at landowners to educate them on the proper methods of animal waste management and phosphorus fertilization application have recently been underemphasized and appear to lack the connection between the practices and the impacts to the ecosystem; and

**Whereas**, many initiatives and partnerships are in place to help scientists, managers and policymakers better understand the complexities of how phosphorus (especially dissolved phosphorus) degrades freshwater ecosystems and contributes to eutrophication, dead zones and algal blooms; and

**Whereas**, several of these efforts such as the Western Lake Erie Basin Partnership, the Ohio Lake Erie Phosphorus Task Force, the Canada-Ontario Agreement (COA), the Great Lakes Nonpoint Abatement Coalition in Wisconsin, the Finger Lakes – Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance in New York, the Conservation Technology Information Center in Indiana, the Lake Huron Binational Partnership among others provide forums for addressing phosphorus related pollution issues on a geographically-based or sector-based basis; and

**Whereas**, federal programs in the U.S. and Canada such as those under the Clean Water Act, the Farm Bill, the Coastal Zone Management Act have individually proven to be effective in helping to improve soil and water quality, reducing sediment runoff and improving wildlife habitat; and

**Whereas**, the Farm Bill, up for reauthorization in 2012, will in concert with other federal, state and binational programs be an important tool to continue progress in the area of Great Lakes Water quality improvement.

**Therefore, be it resolved**, that the Great Lakes Commission applauds the federal governments and the Great Lakes States and Provinces for the variety of programs and initiatives that have contributed to the progress made in the area of phosphorus reduction over the past 30-plus years; and

**Be it further resolved**, that the Great Lakes Commission, recognizing that phosphorus pollution occurs from many sources including point source discharges from aging infrastructure, reiterates its previous request of the federal governments of the U.S. and Canada to provide adequate funding for clean water including support for the State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF) on the U.S. side; and

**Be it further resolved**, that any federal legislation addressing issues associated with toxic algal blooms and dead zones recognize the importance of these problems in the Great Lakes; and

**Be it further resolved**, that the Great Lakes Commission applauds the work of the International Joint Commission (IJC) through its Science Advisory Board to convene the region's leading scientists to better understand the role of phosphorus in the degradation of water quality and urges the IJC to expand its efforts in this area; and

**Be it further resolved**, that the Great Lakes Commission directs its staff to establish a regional phosphorus reduction task force that includes at least one member from each of its member states and provinces to develop a suite of recommendations for federal, state and provincial actions to reduce phosphorus and that its recommendations be focused in areas related to funding for clean water infrastructure, research, technical assistance, outreach and education, especially of land owners; and

**Be it finally resolved**, that this task force review opportunities for expanding and enhancing programs under the 2012 Farm Bill to reduce phosphorus and improve nutrient management for water quality improvement as well as investigate opportunities to address these critical nutrient management issues by working more closely with the NRCS-led technical committees in each state under the current Farm Bill.