
Resolution

Investing in a National Treasure: Great Lakes Commission Congressional Priorities for Fiscal Year 2009

Whereas, the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River are a national treasure and an environmental and economic asset of vital importance to the eight Great Lakes states and the nation as a whole; and

Whereas, 45 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, 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 declining water levels due to climate change 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 blueprint developed in 2005 pursuant to a Presidential Executive Order and endorsed by the Great Lakes states, cities, industries, tribal governments and environmental organizations; and

Whereas, a recent study from The Brookings Institution projected that a \$26 billion investment in Great Lakes restoration could yield up to \$80 billion in benefits for the nation; and

Whereas, Great Lakes-St. Lawrence cities and other local governments are already investing an estimated \$15 billion annually to protect the Great Lakes; and

Whereas, the federal investment in the Great Lakes – already inadequate – will be further eroded by the President's proposed Fiscal Year 2009 budget, which would cut funding for core Great Lakes programs by 16 percent, a decline of nearly \$60 million from current levels; and

Whereas, the Great Lakes Basin Compact calls on the Great Lakes Commission to advocate on behalf of the eight Great Lakes states in support of issues of common interest.

Therefore, be it resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission recommends a comprehensive suite of congressional priorities for Fiscal Year 2009, including endorsement of the recommendations from the Council of Great Lakes Governors to Congress and additional recommendations which complement the governors' requests; and

Be it further resolved, that the following regional priorities are of greatest concern to the Great Lakes Commission:

- **Halting aquatic invasive species** by passing legislation mandating effective ballast water discharge requirements, screening potentially harmful species from non-ballast pathways and fully funding the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to control sea lamprey populations;
- **Cleaning up contaminated sediments** by reauthorizing and fully funding the Great Lakes Legacy Act;
- **Restoring Great Lakes wetlands** by appropriating \$28.5 million for federal programs to partner with the states to restore 200,000 acres of wetlands and \$16 million for the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act; and



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- **Protecting water quality** by appropriating \$1.35 billion for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund to update sewerage systems, safeguard drinking water and protect coastal health; and
- **Ensuring reliable waterways** by appropriating \$17 million to begin construction of the replacement Soo Lock and \$140 million in maintenance funds for Great Lakes commercial and recreational harbors.

Be it further resolved, that these priorities are shared with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority, Council of Great Lakes Industries, and the Healing Our Waters® - Great Lakes Coalition; and

Be it finally resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission calls on Congress to recognize the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River as national assets that merit a national investment, and provide a down payment on this long-term investment by supporting the Commission's FY 2009 legislative priorities for the Great Lakes.

Adopted at the 2008 Semiannual Meeting of the Great Lakes Commission, Washington, D.C., Feb. 26-27, 2008.

The Great Lakes Commission is a binational public agency dedicated to the use, management and protection of the water, land and other natural resources of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system.