

Adopted Feb. 28, 2012

Resolution: Support For a New Approach to Navigation Maintenance Funding For Federally Authorized U.S. Great Lakes Ports and Harbors

Whereas, there are 122 federally authorized ports and harbors in the Great Lakes navigation system, 50 classified as deep draft commercial, 66 as shallow draft recreational, five as recreational deep draft and one as commercial shallow draft; and

Whereas, some 3.3 million cubic yards of sediment accumulate in U.S. Great Lakes ports, harbors and navigation channels annually, impeding commercial and recreational navigation, causing economic hardship, and posing increased risk 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 122 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 16.5 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 is now threatening actual closure of some ports and harbors highly dependent on safe, reliable navigation access but unable to meet current criteria for federal maintenance dredging; and

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

Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission work with the Great Lakes Congressional Delegation and Great Lakes commercial and recreational navigation stakeholders to explore and develop a new legislative initiative to enable low- and medium-use commercial ports on the Great Lakes and shallow draft recreational harbors access to federal funding for navigation maintenance; and

Be It Finally Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission reaffirms its support for reform of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund to assure use of the Fund for its intended purpose: supporting the operation and maintenance, to full authorized project specifications, through sustainable dredging and repair techniques, of federal ports, harbors and navigation channels and infrastructure serving commercial and recreational traffic.