

Adopted Feb. 28, 2012

Resolution: Safeguarding Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Water Resources Through the Support of U.S. Geological Survey Programs and Partnerships

Whereas, clean and abundant supplies of freshwater are vital to the future of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River and the protection of these resources is a top priority of the region's governors and premiers and the U.S. and Canadian federal governments; and

Whereas, water quantity and quality are impacted by a variety of activities such as land use; aquatic invasive species; climate change; residential, industrial and agricultural water use; altered flow regimes in rivers and streams; and groundwater extraction; and

Whereas, the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River states and provinces rely heavily on federal agency programs and support and benefit from partnerships with federal agencies, such as the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), that help ensure the protection of the region's freshwater resources; and

Whereas, the USGS – as the largest water, earth, biological science and civilian mapping agency in the United States – collects, monitors, analyzes and provides scientific information about natural resource conditions, issues and problems that are important to the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River region; and

Whereas, the USGS partners closely with the Great Lakes states, carrying out large-scale, multidisciplinary investigations and supporting impartial scientific information exchange to a variety of stakeholders including state resource managers, planners and other customers; and

Whereas, specific USGS projects and programs such as the Cooperative Water Program (CWP), the National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP) and the National Groundwater Monitoring Program (NGWP) are especially important to the Great Lakes states because they support evaluation and implementation of high priority programs such as the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the State of the Lakes Ecosystem Conference suite of indicators; and

Whereas, the CWP is the largest water availability science program within USGS and is a “bottom-up, on-the-ground” program that is designed to bring local, state and tribal water science needs and decisionmaking together with USGS national capabilities to promote consistent methods and quality assurance for data collection and reporting, innovative monitoring technology, modeling and analysis and more robust data management and delivery systems; and

Whereas, the CWP is a program funded jointly (e.g., requiring a nonfederal match of at least 50%) with state and local governments and other cooperators, and provides support for studies that are considered mutually advantageous to the USGS and localities, states and tribes; and

Whereas, the NSIP is supported jointly by direct USGS program contributions; regional, state and local cooperator match; and other federal agency contributions; and

Whereas, all of these funding sources combined support a network of 7,700 stream gages throughout the country;

Whereas, the CWP has seen flat funding or slight decreases in funding over the past several years, which has resulted in the need for the local (nonfederal) sponsor share of funding to steadily increase to maintain the gaging networks; and

Whereas, at least 190 gages at risk for discontinuation due to lack of funding are in the Great Lakes states, with more than 88 percent of these in Michigan, New York and Pennsylvania and more than 50 percent of the total in New York alone; and

Whereas, the Secure Water Title (Title F) of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (P.L. 111-11) authorizes funding for the programs described above including the NSIP, the NGWP and a grants program to assist states in developing water use and availability datasets; and

Whereas, full funding for the Secure Water Title of P.L. 111-11 has not been realized and FY 2012 appropriations were only two-thirds of the request made to Congress from the USGS to support these important programs.

Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission applauds the strong partnership between the states and USGS and the resulting continued progress in protecting the quality and quantity of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River water resources; and

Be It Further Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission acknowledges the importance of the CWP, the NSIP and the NGWP to help state government agencies better manage their water resources; and

Be It Further Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission strongly urges the continuation of all 190 streamgages located in the Great Lakes states that are at risk of being discontinued; and

Be It Further Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission offers its assistance to USGS to develop new partnerships and identify additional local cooperators to help keep all of the at-risk streamgages operating; and

Be It Further Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission supports full funding of the NSIP and the CWP with a goal to return the CWP cost share to 50-50 and reduce the burden on state and local governments in support of these programs; and

Be It Further Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission supports the implementation of Sec. 9508 (c) of P.L. 111-11 that provides grants to states to help them improve their water use data collection and reporting programs; and

Be It Finally Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission calls upon Congress to fully fund the Secure Water Title (Title F) of P.L. 111-11 to assure the continued protection of the freshwater resources of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River.