



# Great Lakes Green Infrastructure Champions Program

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER WORKSHOP – CALEDON, ON  
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Erb Family Foundation



A unified voice for the states and provinces



# Great Lakes Commission

- Public agency established by the Great Lakes Basin Compact in 1955
- Ontario and Québec joined in 1999
- Allows Great Lakes states and provinces to speak with a unified voice to reach consensus on and advocate for the region's priorities

“To promote the orderly, integrated, and comprehensive development, use, and conservation of the water resources of the Great Lakes Basin.”

*Great Lakes Basin Compact, Article 1, Section 1*

# Key Program Areas

- Water Quality
- Water Management and Infrastructure
- Commercial Navigation
- Coastal Conservation and Habitat Restoration
- Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention and Control
- Information Management and Blue Accounting



# Why stormwater?

- Increased urbanization leads to more surface runoff or overland flow
- Impacts enhanced by climate change
- Associated water quantity and quality concerns



Bay City and Bangor Township, MI  
(Credit: Kip Kronk, Michigan Sea Grant)

**Green Infrastructure Champions**





# Why green infrastructure?



Leslie Barns Streetcar Maintenance and Storage Facility,  
Toronto, ON (Credit: Toronto Transit Commission)

- Helps mitigate quality and quantity issues by restoring natural hydrology
- Natural areas, nature-based engineered solutions, and systems that imitate natural infiltration
- Numerous co-benefits



# Great Lakes Green Infrastructure Champions – overview from pilot program to today

- Purpose: catalyze adoption of green infrastructure (GI) practices and policies by providing mid-sized municipalities with resources they frequently lack
  - Capacity building: mentoring network, workshops
  - Funding: mini-grants
  - Address barriers: policy analysis (pilot only)



Flooding in Sodus Point, New York  
(Credit: Veronica Volk, Great Lakes Today)

# Peer-to-peer mentoring network



- Pairs **Emerging Champions** with **Pioneer Champions** to build capacity for GI
- Provides go-to contact for Emerging Champion that is ready to help and has community context and background information



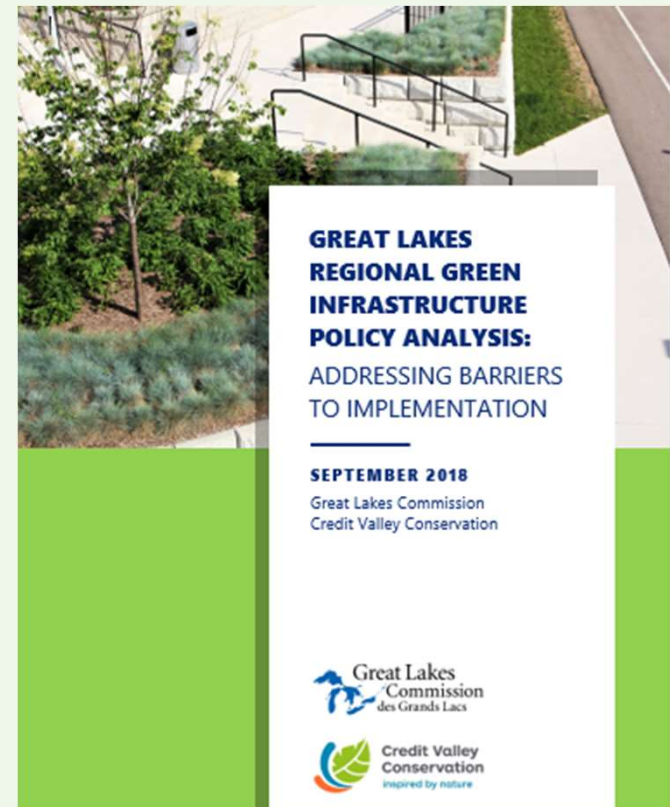
# Mini-Grant Program

- U.S. or Canadian municipalities within the binational Great Lakes
- Demonstrated commitment to participate as Emerging Champion in the Mentoring Network as mentees and will benefit from being paired with a Pioneer Champion
- Projects that remove barriers and build capacity expanding GI implementation in their community/sphere of influence

➤ *Want to have lasting impact after grant funding ends*

# Policy Analysis

- Targeted federal, state, and provincial policies that hinder or enable local GI adoption
- Pilot phase included research, report preparation, and outreach
  - Not formally included in Phase 2



# Summary of Canadian Provincial Recommendations

- Include GI in asset management
- Create new funding mechanisms
- Increase confidence in GI practices



Memorial Park, Sturgis, MI  
(Credit: FTCH)



# *Green Infrastructure Champions*

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