

Great Lakes – Great Jobs: Advancing Great Lakes Restoration and Economic Revitalization

Great Lakes Commission Federal Priorities for FY 2010

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The Chicago skyline along magnificent Lake Michigan.

Investing in the Great Lakes – A Cornerstone of Our Regional Economic Infrastructure

In these tough economic times, we need to maximize the value of our region's infrastructure: our people, our schools, our utilities, and our natural resources. No asset is more vital for our region than the Great Lakes. Together with our provincial partners, the Great Lakes states recently implemented – and Congress ratified – a historic regional Compact to ensure that the quantity and quality of our waters are managed for the well-being of future generations. We recognize the Great Lakes as a vital economic asset for our eight-state region. They provide transportation for raw materials and finished goods; fresh water for our industries; drinking water for our communities; recreation for our citizens; and a vibrant ecosystem for diverse communities of plants and animals.

Now, more than ever, we need our federal partners to match the commitment that states, provinces and cities are making to the future of the Great Lakes. By working together, we have an unprecedented opportunity to create jobs, stimulate economic development and invest in our nation's freshwater resources that will be central to the future of the eight-state Great Lakes region.

Leveraging the Great Lakes to Benefit Our Regional Economy

The Great Lakes are a vital component of our regional and national economy. Maximizing their benefits should be a key policy goal for the federal government. Fortunately, we have a plan in place to achieve this goal: *The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes*. Fully implementing this plan promises significant benefits:

- **\$50 billion in long-term benefits**, according to a comprehensive economic analysis prepared by The Brookings Institution.

- **Advancing a Business Agenda for Economic Transformation in the Great Lakes Region**, according to 25 metropolitan Chambers of Commerce that have recommended critical federal policy priorities for restoring the economic competitiveness of the Great Lakes region.

Priorities for Advancing Great Lakes Restoration and Economic Revitalization

The Great Lakes Commission calls on Congress and President Obama to be equal partners with the eight Great Lakes states in restoring the Great Lakes and making them a central component of a brighter future for our region.

Toward this end, the Great Lakes Commission recommends investments that will advance both the restoration of the Great Lakes and the revitalization of our regional economy. These investments will complement the estimated \$15 billion that local governments are investing annually in the Great Lakes.

Our top regional priorities for the Great Lakes are described in detail, followed by our recommended support for core federal programs that are critical for advancing Great Lakes restoration and economic revitalization. The Commission endorses the priorities of the Great Lakes governors; our priorities complement the governors' and are supported by other regional organizations in the Great Lakes.

TOP REGIONAL PRIORITIES FOR THE GREAT LAKES

- ✓ Create jobs and protect water quality through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund
- ✓ Clean up toxic sediments
- ✓ Close the door on aquatic invasive species
- ✓ Restore valuable fish and wildlife resources
- ✓ Provide sustainable funding for Great Lakes restoration

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Protect Water Quality by Fully Funding the Clean Water State Revolving Fund

In 2006 more than 23 billion gallons of raw sewage were dumped into the Great Lakes because of failing or inadequate wastewater infrastructure. Sewage discharges close Great Lakes beaches every summer, threaten public health, and damage local economies. U.S. EPA has estimated that \$74 billion is needed to upgrade wastewater infrastructure in the eight Great Lakes states. The Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) is the primary federal program for assisting states and local communities in upgrading wastewater infrastructure. Despite its success, federal funding for the CWSRF has declined by nearly 50 percent since 2004. Fully funding the program will help restore the Great Lakes while also creating jobs and revitalizing urban areas. Every billion dollars invested in clean water infrastructure is estimated to generate 47,000 jobs.

REQUEST: Provide \$1.35 billion for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, with nearly \$500 million for the eight Great Lakes states.

Photo: storm drain, courtesy of Don Zelazny, New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation.



Clean Up Toxic Sediments by Fully Funding the Great Lakes Legacy Act

Contaminated sediments in the Great Lakes hamper waterfront development, restrict recreational opportunities, and threaten public health. Since 2002, cleanups funded under the Great Lakes Legacy Act have removed nearly a million cubic yards of toxic sediments from rivers and harbors in the Great Lakes.

These cleanups are creating jobs and stimulating economic development in Detroit, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Buffalo, Gary, Duluth and other urban areas. Cleaning up contaminated sediments

is projected to increase coastal property values in the Great Lakes by \$12 billion to \$19 billion. With an infusion of federal funding, the Great Lakes states and other partners are prepared to implement many new cleanup projects in 2009.

REQUEST: Fully fund the Great Lakes Legacy Act at \$54 million in FY2010 and increase its annual funding authorization to \$150 million.

Photo: Ruddiman Creek cleanup in Muskegon, Mich., courtesy of the Great Lakes Commission.



Close the Door on Aquatic Invasive Species

Aquatic invasive species pose a serious threat to the economic and ecological health of the Great Lakes. More than 180 non-native species have become established in the Great Lakes, costing the region an estimated \$5.7 billion annually. The number of non-native species continues to grow. Recent new discoveries include the bloody red shrimp (*Hemimysis anomala*) and the VHS virus (Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia), which caused fish kills in lakes Ontario, Erie and Lake St. Clair and has spread to inland lakes. Invasive species clog water intake pipes, cover beaches with sharp-edged shells, wreak havoc on the food chain and threaten a multibillion dollar recreational fishing industry.

REQUEST: We urge the legislative and executive branches to establish federal requirements that guard the Great Lakes against the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species, including adoption and enforcement of strong ballast water treatment provisions that reflect states' rights for protecting water quality and sovereign natural resources. We support legislation to screen and restrict trade in live organisms that could become invasive. In addition, provide \$22 million for the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, including its sea lamprey control program, and full funding for state and regional aquatic invasive species control programs under the National Invasive Species Act.

Photo: sea lamprey attacking salmon, by Anne de Haas.



Top Regional Priorities *for the* Great Lakes



Restore Valuable Fish and Wildlife Resources by Fully Funding the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act

Fish and wildlife are a vital resource for the Great Lakes region. The region has lost more than half of its wetlands and 60 percent of its forests. This threatens habitat for sensitive plant and animal species, as well as the recreational value of fish and wildlife resources. Boating, fishing, hunting and wildlife watching generate over \$50 billion annually and provide hundreds of thousands of jobs. The Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act is specifically directed at conserving this important component of the Great Lakes. The Act enables the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to partner with the states and other entities to address high-value habitat restoration projects. Funding for the Act has remained level for more than a decade, despite growing demand for support.



REQUEST: Provide full funding for the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act (\$16 million) to enable the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to partner with the Great Lakes states and others to restore and conserve fish and wildlife resources.

Photo: trout fishing, by Sami Moudavaris.

CORE PROGRAMS FOR ADVANCING GREAT LAKES RESTORATION

In addition to our top regional priorities, the Great Lakes Commission urges Congress to support several core programs for restoring, protecting and effectively managing the Great Lakes. **Turn the page for details >**

Provide Sustainable Funding for Great Lakes Restoration

Despite having a well-defined plan and a clear commitment from the region, federal funding for Great Lakes restoration has been inadequate.

We urge Congress, in collaboration with the Obama Administration, to establish a block grant program, trust fund or related mechanism for directing funds to critical Great Lakes restoration needs in an efficient and strategic manner. This could be part of a national program to implement large-scale restoration plans for critical ecosystems. Such a mechanism must include effective partnerships with the states, sound science and clear accountability. Overall coordination should be guided by a high-level Great Lakes “czar” who consolidates and rationalizes budget priorities from multiple federal agencies.

REQUEST: Adopt legislation that authorizes a block-grant program, trust fund or related mechanism to fully fund the *Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes*.



Photo: children on the beach at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, Lake Michigan, by Steve Geer.



Core Programs for Advancing Great Lakes Restoration

In addition to our top regional priorities, the Great Lakes Commission urges Congress to support the following core programs for restoring, protecting and effectively managing the Great Lakes.

Photo: the Edward L. Ryerson straight-deck bulk carrier on Lake Erie, by Rona Proudfoot.

Areas of Concern and Toxic Pollutants

- Provide funding for U.S. EPA and the Great Lakes states to implement cleanup plans in Areas of Concern.
- Provide \$4 million for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Great Lakes Remedial Action Plan Program to support restoration projects in Areas of Concern.
- Provide \$2 million for NOAA's Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Program to restore fish and wildlife resources in Areas of Concern.
- Provide \$4 million under the Great Lakes Air Deposition Program to support state, tribal and regional programs to track and halt mercury and other toxic air pollutants.

Coastal Health

- In addition to increasing funding for the CWSRF, support critical drinking water infrastructure upgrades by increasing funding for the Safe Drinking Water Revolving Fund.
- Reauthorize and fully fund the BEACH Act.
- Reauthorize and fully fund the Coastal Zone Management Act.
- Authorize the Integrated Ocean Observing System and provide \$96 million to NOAA to support IOOS, with \$50 million for the regional systems, including the Great Lakes Observing System, and \$46 million for the national program.

Habitat Restoration and Nonpoint Source Pollution Control

- Provide \$5 million for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Great Lakes Fishery and Ecosystem Restoration Program.
- Provide \$82 million to U.S. EPA for pass through to the Great Lakes states under the Section 319 watershed restoration program.
- Provide \$5 million for the Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control.

Infrastructure for Commercial Navigation and Recreational Boating

- Provide \$100 million to begin construction of the Sault Ste. Marie Lock Expansion Program.
- Provide \$125 million to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the Great Lakes navigation Operations and Maintenance budget and additional funding to dredge recreational harbors in the Great Lakes.

International Joint Commission

- Fully fund the U.S. section of the International Joint Commission to support the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, including an Upper Great Lakes Study to investigate factors that affect water levels in the Great Lakes, and an adaptive management program for the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River system as recommended by the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Water Level Control Study Board.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

- Fully fund the National Sea Grant College Program at \$75.6 million.
- Provide \$17.5 million for the Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory to continue high priority research, including habitat restoration and human health initiatives.
- Provide \$28 million for the Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research for research on invasive species, hypoxia, harmful algal blooms and climate change impacts.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

- Provide \$25 million for the Great Lakes National Program Office to coordinate federal programs for the Great Lakes, such as the Great Lakes Legacy Act.
- Provide \$18 million to the Office of Research and Development to support freshwater ecology and toxicology research conducted by labs in Duluth, Minn. and Grosse Ile, Mich.

U.S. Geological Survey

- Provide \$13.3 million to support activities of the Great Lakes Science Center, including deepwater fishery science and ecosystem research.

About the Great Lakes Commission

The Great Lakes Commission was established by the Great Lakes states in 1955 to coordinate management of the water resources of the Great Lakes basin and to represent the states' interests on Great Lakes matters before the federal government. Based in Ann Arbor, Mich., the Commission promotes the concept that a healthy environment and prosperous economy should be mutually dependent, not exclusive, goals. With appointees from the eight states, the Commission serves as a forum for the development of regional policy and as an advocate for legislation and programs to benefit the Great Lakes. The Canadian provinces of Ontario and Québec participate in all Commission deliberations and activities as associate members.



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