

The Great Lakes shaped our region's cultural identity and fueled our economic growth in the past. With proper care and wise investments, they will continue to be a foundation for economic prosperity and a high quality of life in the future.

The Great Lakes are an invaluable resource that supports

- 1.5 million jobs generating \$62 billion in wages annually
- 4 million recreational boats and a \$16 billion annual boating industry
- A \$30 billion tourism economy supported by 9.2 million anglers, 4.6 million hunters, and 23.2 million bird watchers
- The longest inland deep-draft navigation system in the world, moving 322 million metric tons of cargo annually, generating 226,000 jobs, \$14 billion in wages and \$34 billion in business revenue

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is addressing serious problems facing the Great Lakes by

- Cleaning up toxic sediments and restoring degraded areas
- Restoring habitat for valuable fish and wildlife
- Combating Asian carp and other harmful invasive species
- Reducing polluted runoff and safeguarding beaches
- Monitoring environmental health, tracking progress, and educating the public

# Sustaining Environmental Restoration and Economic Revitalization in the Great Lakes Region

Great Lakes Commission Federal Priorities for 2013

**MARCH 2013**

## Investing in Our Future

The Great Lakes are an invaluable environmental and economic resource for the eight-state Great Lakes region. They provide vital benefits for the 36 million Americans and Canadians who live in the region, including unparalleled recreational opportunities for local residents and visiting tourists; abundant fresh water for communities and industries; an environmentally efficient transportation system for raw materials and finished goods; and unique and extensive habitats for valuable fish and wildlife resources.

As we work to grow our regional economy, it is imperative that we maximize the value of the Great Lakes as both a natural treasure and a vital economic asset. With 90 percent of our nation's fresh surface water, the Great Lakes give our region a unique competitive advantage that can play a decisive role in our future. Leveraging the value of the Great Lakes is an important component of our broader strategy to create jobs, stimulate economic development, and invest in freshwater resources and waterfront communities.

## Sustaining Our Progress

Our region has made substantial progress in recent years in cleaning up the Great Lakes and addressing threats to their health. Most significantly, we are implementing the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), an unprecedented, multi-year program that is addressing the most serious problems facing the Great Lakes. This action-oriented initiative is translating our restoration strategy – broadly endorsed by the Great Lakes states, cities, tribes, conservation groups, and business and industry – into site-specific actions that are generating real benefits for communities across our region.

After years of planning, the GLRI is having a real impact and the federal commitment is leveraging substantial investments from the Great Lakes states, local communities and nongovernmental partners. Much work remains, however, and it is critical that the Initiative be carried through to completion. Fully implementing our Great Lakes restoration strategy is a wise investment that is projected to generate over \$50 billion in long-term economic benefits.

## Strengthening the Federal-State Partnership for the Great Lakes

The Great Lakes states are partnering closely with the federal government to restore the Great Lakes and leverage them as an asset to build a more prosperous future for our region. The Great Lakes Commission urges Congress and the Administration to support the following priorities to strengthen this partnership, sustain our restoration efforts, and address specific challenges to the long-term environmental and economic health of the Great Lakes.

# Top Priorities for the Great Lakes

## Sustain Progress Under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

The Great Lakes states appreciate the ongoing support from Congress and the Administration for the GLRI. Sustaining funding for the GLRI is critical to build on the investments underway at the federal, state and local level and help the region “get the job done!” We are making progress in achieving the goals outlined in the GLRI Action Plan. In 2013 special priority is being placed on cleaning up Areas of Concern, reducing phosphorus runoff that contributes to harmful algal blooms, and preventing the introduction and spread of harmful aquatic invasive species. A significant portion of GLRI funds are directed to states, cities and nongovernmental groups that are best equipped to address local restoration priorities. With this in mind, the Commission urges Congress and the Administration to continue strengthening collaboration with the states, improve administrative efficiency and ensure that resources are directed at the most important priorities in shoreline communities.

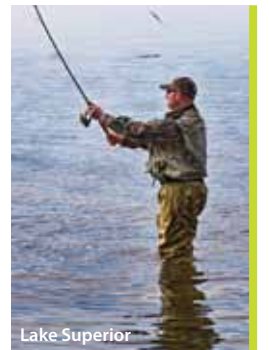
Lake Huron



**REQUEST:** Provide \$300-\$475 million for the GLRI in FY 2014 to sustain progress in restoring the Great Lakes. Extend the timeframe for carrying out the GLRI to accommodate the slower pace of funding and the complexity of this large-scale restoration challenge.

## Pass Comprehensive Legislation to Enhance and Accelerate Great Lakes Conservation Efforts

The co-chairs of the bipartisan Senate Great Lakes Task Force, senators Carl Levin (D-MI) and Mark Kirk (R-IL), will soon introduce the Great Lakes Ecosystem Protection Act. This comprehensive legislation will authorize several critical, existing Great Lakes programs and strengthen coordination with regional stakeholders and binational cooperation with Canada. The Commission supports legislation that will



Lake Superior

- Authorize the GLRI to target significant problems facing the basin at a funding level of \$475 million annually
- Reauthorize U.S. EPA's Great Lakes National Program Office to facilitate policy and administrative tasks relating to the Great Lakes
- Reauthorize the Great Lakes Legacy Act at a funding level of \$150 million annually to remove contaminated sediments from the Great Lakes
- Establish a Great Lakes Advisory Board to secure input from regional stakeholders
- Authorize a Federal Interagency Task Force to coordinate restoration efforts among federal agencies
- Advance implementation of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement with Canada

**REQUEST:** Pass comprehensive legislation to authorize and enhance important, existing Great Lakes restoration and management programs and strengthen regional and binational coordination.

Mackinac Bridge

## Strengthen Protections Against Asian Carp and Other Aquatic Invasive Species

Federal action is needed to protect the Great Lakes – and other regions of the country – against invasions by harmful, non-native species, including Asian carp. Congress should maintain funding for the GLRI and other key programs to ensure full implementation of the Asian Carp Control Strategy Framework. The Army Corps of Engineers should coordinate closely with the Great Lakes states and stakeholders in the Chicago area to quickly identify, design and implement feasible options for separating the Great Lakes and Mississippi River watersheds. Specifically, the Administration should accelerate completion of – and take action on – the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study, consistent with direction from Congress. In addition, the Commission urges the Administration to implement a protective and achievable federal ballast water management program that harmonizes regulations and prevents the introduction of invasive species. Legislation is also needed to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species via the trade in live organisms and other vectors. Congress should provide full funding for the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's successful sea lamprey control program.



**REQUEST:** Provide funding and expedite efforts to prevent Asian carp from entering the Great Lakes and support effective invasive species prevention programs. Enact legislation to reform the federal Lacey Act to prevent the introduction and spread of harmful species in trade.

## Address the Crisis Facing Commercial Navigation and Recreational Harbors in the Great Lakes

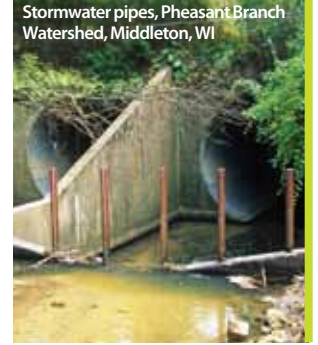
The economic viability of our water transportation system is at risk due to reduced funding for dredging, lower water levels in the lakes, diminishing options for disposal of dredged material and aging navigation infrastructure. Inadequate dredging of Great Lakes ports and harbors has significantly reduced carrying capacity for waterborne commerce and threatened some small harbors with actual closure. The Commission has called for reform of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) to ensure that monies collected are used for their intended purpose – maintaining and operating navigation infrastructure. Congress should support permanent reform of the HMTF and ensure that adequate funding is provided to maintain the economic viability of ports, harbors and other infrastructure. New approaches are also needed to support dredging of recreational harbors, which are vital to the economic health of coastal communities.



**REQUEST:** Reform the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund to ensure that monies collected are spent for their intended purpose, and provide funding to the Army Corps of Engineers for the Great Lakes Navigation Operations and Maintenance budget to dredge commercial and recreational harbors.

## Help Local Communities Upgrade Aging Water Infrastructure

Aging wastewater infrastructure allows the release of inadequately treated sewage into local waterways every year. Sewage discharges continue to close Great Lakes beaches, threaten public health and damage local economies. Similarly, degraded drinking water infrastructure is a costly challenge for many communities. The Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) programs assist states and local communities in upgrading water infrastructure.



**REQUEST:** Provide funding for the Clean Water and Drinking Water SRFs in FY 2014 to repair failing water infrastructure, including separating combined sewers and upgrading sewage treatment plants to prevent the release of nutrients that contribute to harmful algal blooms in the Great Lakes. Include provisions for low-interest loans and grants to assist economically struggling communities.

## Reauthorize the Farm Bill to Advance Soil Conservation and Water Quality Protections in the Great Lakes Region

Agriculture is a vital industry in the Great Lakes region. However, soil erosion and runoff of nutrients, fertilizers and other chemicals from agricultural lands can pollute rivers and streams and contribute to harmful algal blooms – a growing problem in the Great Lakes. Reauthorization of the Farm Bill provides an important opportunity to safeguard the Great Lakes and address threats to agricultural productivity and water quality. In 2012 Congress made significant progress in crafting a new Farm Bill, but did not pass final legislation. Both the Senate and House bills included a new Regional Conservation Partnership Program that, if approved and funded, would strengthen our region's ability to address priority watersheds with the greatest conservation needs. This innovative approach will leverage ongoing efforts of the Great Lakes states, regional organizations, landowners and other partners to respond to local priorities related to soil erosion, habitat protection and water quality. Ultimately, this will benefit landowners and their communities, while safeguarding the health of the Great Lakes. The Commission strongly supports the proposed Regional Conservation Partnership Program and asks that it be retained and adequately funded in the final Farm Bill.



**REQUEST:** Reauthorize the Farm Bill and include strong provisions for conservation programs – including the Regional Conservation Partnership Program – that address soil and water conservation needs, reduce nutrients on a priority watershed basis and support sustainable agricultural practices.

## Maintain Base Funding for Federal Programs

Congress has been clear that GLRI funding is intended to be *in addition* to base funding for many essential programs.

**REQUEST:** Support federal programs that contribute to the restoration, protection and effective management of the Great Lakes. Examples of important programs include the following:

### Department of Agriculture

Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Farm Service Agency  
U.S. Forest Service conservation programs

### Department of the Interior

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Aquatic Invasive Species Program  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act  
U.S. Geological Survey, Great Lakes Science Center  
U.S. Geological Survey, National Streamflow Information Program

### Department of State

Great Lakes Fishery Commission, Sea Lamprey Control Program  
International Joint Commission, U.S. Section

### Environmental Protection Agency

State Revolving Funds for Clean Water and Drinking Water BEACH Act Grants  
Clean Water Act Section 106 Water Pollution Control Program and Section 319 Watershed Restoration Program  
Great Lakes Air Deposition Program  
Great Lakes National Program Office  
Office of Research and Development Labs in Duluth, Minn. and Grosse Ile, Mich.

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Center for Sponsored Coastal and Ocean Research  
Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program  
Coastal Zone Management Act Grants  
Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory  
Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Program  
Integrated Ocean Observing System, Great Lakes Observing System  
National Sea Grant College Program

### U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Great Lakes Fishery and Ecosystem Restoration Program  
Great Lakes Navigation Operations and Maintenance  
Great Lakes Recreational Harbors Dredging  
Great Lakes Remedial Action Plan Program  
Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study

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## 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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