

For immediate release

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Contact: Christine Manninen

734-560-8598 (cell)

734-971-9135 (office)

manninen@glc.org

Great Lakes mobile beach app to be enhanced

CHICAGO – As swimming season begins in the Great Lakes, the Great Lakes Commission (GLC) reminds beachgoers and boaters to download *myBeachCast*, beachcast.glin.net, to get the latest swim advisories, weather conditions and hazard alerts for more than 2,000 beaches in the Great Lakes region.

myBeachCast will add an iOS (iPhone) version in the year ahead, as well as additional information about hazards and dangerous currents to increase the safety of beachgoers. The announcement was made by Christine Manninen, GLC communications director, at a news conference hosted by the Great Lakes Surf Rescue Project today at the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago. The event kicked off Great Lakes Beach Safety Awareness week, designated by the Great Lakes governors as June 1-7.

“We want to ensure that people’s time spent at the beach and enjoying our waters is safe and fun,” Manninen said. “Through the use of mobile technologies, we have new ways to alert people to high waves and other dangerous conditions and hopefully save lives.”

Funding for the beach app enhancements comes through a recently awarded grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coastal Storms Program.

To help protect swimmers from dangerous currents, *myBeachCast* now features beach hazard statements issued by NOAA. Beach hazard statements are issued for Great Lakes beaches by the NOAA National Weather Service (NWS) when the potential for strong and dangerous (rip) currents and waves is medium or high.

Drownings in the Great Lakes are on the rise in recent years. The NWS incident reports indicate that on Lake Michigan alone there have been more than 300 current-related incidents since 2002 and over 60 percent of rescue attempts have occurred near piers and other permanent structures where dangerous currents are often present.

Swimmers should look for green, yellow and red flags at beaches, which indicate the presence of dangerous currents. In addition, beachgoers can follow these tips to stay safe:

- Ask children to wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket

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Great Lakes Commission

Kenneth G. Johnson (WI), Chair; Tim A. Eder, Executive Director

Eisenhower Corporate Park • 2805 S. Industrial Hwy. Suite 100 • Ann Arbor, Michigan • 48104-6791

734-971-9135 • Fax: 734-971-9150 • Web: www.glc.org

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- In an emergency, call 911 and communicate your exact location
- Bring something that floats if going in the water
- If caught in a dangerous current, alert someone that you're in trouble by shouting or waving your arms, and then float (don't panic) until someone can assist or you can swim at an angle out of the current to shore
- Avoid swimming near piers, breakwalls and other structures
- If there are high winds or waves, stay on shore. **When in doubt, don't go out!**

The Great Lakes Commission, in partnership with the Great Lakes states, LimnoTech and the Great Lakes Observing System, has developed *myBeachCast* to provide convenient, public access to swim advisories and related environmental conditions for public beaches in the Great Lakes region. Funded by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, the app also includes real-time and forecasted weather and lake conditions, and nearshore marine forecasts. For additional information, visit beachcast.glin.net.

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The Great Lakes Commission, chaired by Kenneth G. Johnson (Wisconsin), is an interstate compact agency established under state and U.S. federal law and dedicated to promoting a strong economy, healthy environment and high quality of life for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region and its residents. The Commission consists of governors' appointees, state legislators, and agency officials from its eight member states. Associate membership for Ontario and Québec was established through the signing of a "Declaration of Partnership." The Commission maintains a formal Observer program involving U.S. and Canadian federal agencies, tribal authorities, binational agencies and other regional interests. The Commission offices are located in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Learn more at www.glc.org.