

For immediate release

Feb. 25, 2015

Contact: Tim Eder

Office: 734-971-9135

Cell: 734-604-7281

Email: teder@glc.org

Great Lakes Commission releases annual federal appropriations priorities, highlights need for collaboration

Washington, D.C. – New strategies for addressing large-scale problems like nutrient pollution were highlighted at the Semiannual Meeting of the Great Lakes Commission, which concluded today in Washington, D.C.

Congressman David Joyce (R-Ohio), in addressing the Commission this morning, noted that the Great Lakes provide drinking water for close to 40 million people. “The Toledo water quality crisis was an eye-opener and highlighted the importance of potable drinking water – something we often take for granted living in such a water-rich region,” Rep. Joyce said. “With dedication and resources, we can and need to cure these problems.”

In August 2014 over 400,000 residents of southeast Michigan and northwest Ohio were advised to avoid drinking and cooking with water supplied by the City of Toledo after local and state laboratories detected unsafe levels of microcystin, a toxin produced by an algae bloom in western Lake Erie near the city’s drinking water intake.

In response to the Toledo crisis, the Great Lakes Commission has formed a Lake Erie Nutrient Targets (LENT) Working Group to explore strategies for reducing nutrients. Outputs of the working group will include a joint action plan that identifies areas of improvement and new, innovative programs and practices to reduce nutrient loads, which is agreeable to and endorsed by the Lake Erie states and the province of Ontario.

Kelly Burch, chairman of the Great Lakes Commission and executive director of oil and gas operations for the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, acknowledged the great progress that we’re making at addressing nutrient issues, largely because of the collaboration and ability for the Great Lakes states and provinces to work together in the best interest of the Great Lakes.

“Over our 60-year history, one of the real strengths of the Great Lakes Commission is speaking with a unified voice,” Burch said, pointing to the Commission’s annual federal appropriations priorities, released today, which will guide the Commission’s advocacy efforts in the year ahead. “We recognize that the issues facing the region are constantly evolving and the Commission must continue to build on our strengths and promote collaboration in addressing the challenges facing the environmental and economic health of our region.”

The GLC’s priorities for the new Congress include sustaining progress under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, passing comprehensive legislation to strengthen and accelerate Great Lakes conservation efforts,

-more-

Great Lakes Commission

Kelvin Burch (PA), 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

Illinois • Indiana • Michigan • Minnesota • New York • Ohio • Ontario • Pennsylvania • Québec • Wisconsin

protecting the Great Lakes from Asian carp and other invasive species, helping communities to upgrade aging water infrastructure and safeguard drinking water, ensuring Farm Bill conservation programs target watersheds contributing polluted runoff to the Great Lakes, and providing resources for dredging and infrastructure improvements to maintain the Great Lakes Navigation System.

The Commission passed three resolutions, which included

- acknowledging completion of the final report, *Summary of Issues and Trends Surrounding the Movement of Crude Oil in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Region*, along with four issue briefs that provide important information regarding oil extraction, movement, risks and benefits of the different modes of transport, and recent legal, policy and regulatory developments;
- endorsing a suite of federal priorities for 2015, and calling on Congress and the Administration to continue to sustain progress and strengthen collaboration with the eight Great Lakes states in the implementation of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative; and
- urging the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to prioritize the International Great Lakes Datum (IGLD) update, with anticipated release in 2025, and to partner with states, Canadian provinces and federal entities to extend the accuracy of the new IGLD.

Mayor John Dickert (Racine, Wis.), chairman of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, participated in a panel discussing strategies for reducing nutrient pollution to the Great Lakes, which are contributing to harmful algae blooms in many areas. “The algal bloom issue is real and local officials are dealing with it day by day,” Dickert told the Commission. “Public health and our kids are depending on us to solve these problems and ensure that the drinking water crisis that happened in Toledo doesn’t happen again.”

Dennis McGrath, with The Nature Conservancy, noted that it’s not an either/or question. “We can have productive agriculture and economic growth in our region but still protect the ecosystem,” McGrath said.

The Great Lakes Commission legislative priorities for 2015 are available at www.glc.org/policy/glc-legislative-priorities. State fact sheets are also available, outlining Great Lakes restoration projects underway in each jurisdiction.

###

The Great Lakes Commission, chaired by Kelly Burch, executive director of oil and gas operations for the Pennsylvania Dept. of Environmental Protection, 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.