



RESOLUTION
Adopted September 29, 2015

Advancing coastal community revitalization through strengthened federal legislation and programs

Whereas, the Great Lakes are a vital environmental and economic asset for the eight states and two provinces of the Great Lakes region, where waterfront areas historically have been centers of economic activity for coastal communities, supporting industries with fresh water, energy, and access to waterborne networks for shipping raw materials and finished goods; and

Whereas, the industrial era left a legacy of contamination and habitat degradation in many shoreline areas and the decline in heavy industry in the Great Lakes region has left many waterfronts vacant or underutilized; and

Whereas, many coastal communities are working to clean up and reclaim waterfront areas and align them with new plans for economic development, public access, recreation, habitat restoration and other uses, along with continued support for commercial navigation; and

Whereas, the U.S. and Canadian federal governments have recognized the importance of Great Lakes coasts in their shared commitment to a Great Lakes nearshore framework under the Canada-U.S. Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement; and

Whereas, progress in cleaning up and restoring degraded shorelines has accelerated significantly in recent years with support from the Great Lakes Legacy Act, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and other state, provincial and federal programs, particularly in Areas of Concern designated under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, where cleanup work has been completed in seven U.S. AOCs and five Canadian AOCs with another fifteen AOCs scheduled for completion over the next five years; and

Whereas, regional leaders have recognized the economic potential of fresh water and the “Blue Economy” in the Great Lakes region and there is significant interest in understanding challenges and opportunities in this area; and

Whereas, multiple state, provincial and federal programs support healthy and sustainable coastal development, such as the Coastal Zone Management Program as implemented by the states, and Ontario’s Provincial Policy Statement; and

Whereas, the *Waterfront Communities Revitalization and Resiliency Act of 2015* (S. 1935) has been introduced and would create a voluntary Resilient Waterfront Community designation, authorize funding for developing and implementing resilient waterfront plans, establish a Resilient Waterfront Communities network, and provide preferred status for Resilient Waterfront Communities in other U.S. federal grant and loan programs.

Therefore, be it resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission calls for legislation that supports U.S federal, state and local efforts to clean up, restore, and revitalize waterfront areas in the Great Lakes region, including provisions that strengthen federal policies, programs and funding; facilitate state leadership; promote the exchange of best practices; emphasize sustainability and resiliency to impacts from climate change; and balance multiple benefits such as recreation, fish and wildlife, commercial navigation, and water-dependent industries; and

Be it further resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission urges U.S. and Canadian federal agencies to align, where appropriate, existing programs, policies and funding to support coastal communities in revitalizing waterfront areas and attracting water-dependent industries, including funding incentives for community-based leadership and planning; and

Be it finally resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission urges its member states and provinces, in collaboration with appropriate partners, to explore opportunities to advance the “Blue Economy” and support and strengthen efforts of coastal communities, including research, policy development, technology transfer, and information exchange.