

For immediate release
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Great Lakes Commission applauds House action on Great Lakes Ecological and Economic Protection Act

Ann Arbor, Mich. – The Great Lakes Commission commends today’s introduction of a House bill that authorizes several critical Great Lakes restoration programs and strengthens regional coordination and binational cooperation with Canada.

The Great Lakes Ecological and Economic Protection Act (GLEEPA) was introduced by U.S. Rep. Dave Joyce, representing Ohio’s 14th District. The bill is virtually identical to a Senate bill introduced on June 26, with the exception that it authorizes the Great Lakes Legacy Act at \$100 million annually versus \$150 million in the Senate bill. The Great Lakes Commission gratefully acknowledges Rep. Joyce’s leadership on the legislation and urges members of the House Great Lakes delegation to sign on as co-sponsors of the bill. Other members joining Rep. Joyce in introducing the bill include Reps. John Dingell (Mich.), Louise Slaughter (N.Y.), Tom Petri (Wis.), Sander Levin (Mich.) and Candice Miller (Mich.).

“This legislation will advance programs that are vital to the environmental and economic well-being of the entire region,” said Great Lakes Commission Chair Kenneth G. Johnson, water division administrator at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. “GLEEPA will ensure that these valuable programs continue to protect and restore our Great Lakes and support our freshwater investment strategy.”

Earlier today, Rep. Joyce hosted a press conference in Cleveland to announce the news with local partners.

“With the continued challenges of nutrient management and threats from invasive species, GLEEPA is of utmost importance to the Great Lakes and Lake Erie, in particular,” said Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources Director James Zehringer, head of the Great Lakes Commission’s Ohio delegation. “We must continue the progress that is being made under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.”

(more)

Great Lakes Commission

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GLEEPA will:

- Formally authorize the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), a multiagency program that is implementing a comprehensive cleanup strategy built on the priorities of the Great Lakes states, including removing contaminated sediments and restoring degraded coastal areas; halting the introduction and spread of harmful aquatic invasive species such as Asian carp; preventing polluted runoff that causes algal blooms; and restoring valuable fish and wildlife resources
- Reauthorize the Great Lakes Legacy Act, a program begun in 2002 to clean up contaminated sediments in 31 U.S. and binational Areas of Concern across the Great Lakes
- Establish an Interagency Task Force to coordinate federal Great Lakes programs and a Great Lakes Advisory Board to secure input and guidance from regional stakeholders
- Authorize U.S. EPA's Great Lakes National Program Office, which leads the GLRI and the Great Lakes Legacy Act, oversees implementation of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement with Canada, and coordinates other Great Lakes programs and policies.

Now in its fourth year, the GLRI is generating meaningful, site-specific improvements.

A comprehensive restoration plan developed in 2005, which is the foundation of the GLRI, is projected to generate at least \$50 billion in long-term economic benefits for the Great Lakes region.

Passage of GLEEPA is among the Great Lakes Commission's top legislative priorities for 2013. State officials and local leaders are encouraged to contact their members of Congress to support passage of the bill in the current session of Congress.

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The Great Lakes Commission, chaired by Kenneth G. Johnson, water division administrator at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, 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.