



## Great Lakes Commission Recommendations for Improving the Implementation of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

*Approved by the Great Lakes Commission Board of Directors  
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### Overview

On behalf of its eight member states, the Great Lakes Commission calls on the House and Senate appropriations committees to improve the efficiency of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) by directing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) to strengthen coordination with the states and give them greater authority over how the GLRI is implemented. The Great Lakes states are on the “front line” in implementing the GLRI and making it a success. They know what the most important restoration priorities are and can direct resources to them efficiently. It is critical that U.S. EPA and other federal agencies collaborate with the states and give them a leading role in guiding and implementing the GLRI. Toward this end, the Commission urges the House and Senate appropriations committees to include guidance on the GLRI in the reports that accompany the FY 2012 Interior-Environment appropriations bill.

### Recommended Guidance for FY 2012 Appropriations for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

- **Strengthen coordination with the states and provide greater authority in implementing the GLRI:** Given the critical role of the eight Great Lakes states in implementing the GLRI, it is imperative that U.S. EPA coordinate closely with the states to establish annual funding plans and manage the Initiative’s implementation. U.S. EPA needs to consult with the states to assess progress under the GLRI, identify future priorities, and refine the implementation process. U.S. EPA should provide the states with an elevated role in administering the GLRI, as well as special consideration for resources.
- **Administer GLRI funding in a way that minimizes transaction costs and maximizes efficiency and on-the ground results:** U.S. EPA should use block grants to the states or similar mechanisms to direct funding to specific priorities. The multitude of federal agencies, programs and funding mechanisms utilized to date is inefficient and imposes unnecessary administrative burdens on both federal agencies and state and local governments that are working to direct resources to site-specific restoration needs. The states strongly support the use of a block grant or “bundling” approach that enables them to manage funds efficiently, focus on the highest priorities, coordinate with local governments and other stakeholders, and accelerate the pace of restoration actions.
- **Maintain the GLRI’s focus on existing priorities and on-the-ground actions:** The GLRI should continue to focus on implementing projects that address priorities in existing plans, including the Initiative’s Action Plan, the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration restoration strategy, state-specific restoration plans, remedial action plans for Areas of Concern, Lakewide Management Plans, and related documents. GLRI funding should be devoted predominantly to site-specific restoration actions, versus monitoring, planning or management activities.
- **Minimize nonfederal match requirements:** Recognizing the severe fiscal constraints facing state and local governments and the substantial contributions they already make to Great Lakes restoration, GLRI funding should be administered through programs that do not require non-federal funding, or where this requirement can be met with in-kind services.
- **Maintain base funding for existing programs:** The GLRI is intended to supplement, but not supplant, funding for existing programs that address the Great Lakes. U.S. EPA should ensure that federal agencies do not use resources under the GLRI to reduce or divert base funding for existing programs. In addition, Great Lakes projects should not receive less consideration in national programs due to the GLRI.