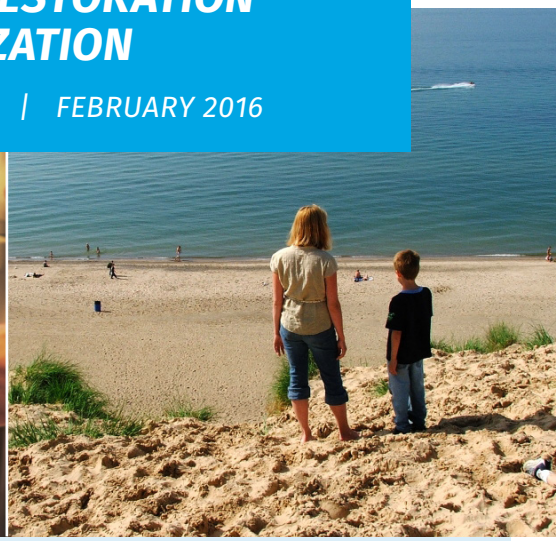
PRIORITIES FOR **GREAT LAKES RESTORATION** AND **ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION**

A JOINT AGENDA FOR THE GREAT LAKES REGION | FEBRUARY 2016





The Great Lakes are a vital environmental and economic asset for our eight-state region. With 90 percent of our nation's fresh surface water, they supply drinking water for more than 30 million Americans and provide valuable benefits for tourism and recreation, industry, and transportation. Despite the progress that has been made in cleaning up the lakes, they face serious threats from legacy contaminants, toxic algae blooms, failing water infrastructure, wetland loss, and invasive species such as Asian carp. Changing climate conditions will only worsen these problems. The contamination of drinking water in Flint, Michigan, and Toledo, Ohio, shows that Great Lakes water resources remain vulnerable. We must address these issues and fully implement our Great Lakes restoration strategy, which is projected to generate $50 billion in long-term economic benefits. Restoring and protecting the Great Lakes is vital to safeguard drinking water, create jobs, stimulate economic development and revitalize waterfront communities.

Our organizations urge Congress and the Administration to take action on these priorities for the Great Lakes:

Support the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

The GLRI is producing results, with more than 2,900 restoration projects implemented, six Areas of Concern cleaned up, a 70 percent increase in farmland enrolled in conservation programs in priority watersheds, 150,000 acres of habitat restored, and 3,800 miles of rivers opened for native fish. Much work remains and Congress should sustain this successful program. ***Provide at least $300 million for the GLRI in FY 2017 to advance restoration of our Great Lakes.***

Invest in drinking water protection and wastewater infrastructure

The drinking water crisis in Flint, Michigan, and the closure of the Toledo, Ohio, drinking water system in 2014, underscore the need for increased action to safeguard drinking water. In addition, failing sewers release billions of gallons of sewage and stormwater into the Great Lakes each year, closing beaches and threatening public health. More intense storms from changing climate conditions could worsen this problem. ***Boost funding for the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund programs to help local communities upgrade aging water infrastructure to protect drinking water, reduce sewer overflows, and prevent beach contamination.***

Pass legislation to authorize Great Lakes restoration and protection

Legislation is needed to formally authorize the GLRI and support other critical, existing Great Lakes programs. The Senate committee has passed, and the House committee will soon consider, bipartisan bills authorizing the GLRI (H.R. 223, S. 1024), which should be passed by Congress. This legislation will clarify the focus and accountability of our restoration efforts and ensure the GLRI continues into the future. ***Pass legislation that authorizes the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.***

Protect the Great Lakes from Asian carp, sea lamprey and other aquatic invasive species

Strong, sustained actions are needed to prevent the introduction and spread of Asian carp and other aquatic invasive species that threaten the health of the lakes and the benefits they provide for the Great Lakes community. ***Prevent the introduction of Asian carp by sustaining successful monitoring and control efforts under the Asian Carp Control Strategy Framework; providing funding to the Army Corps of Engineers to complete the Brandon Road Feasibility Study as quickly as practicable; finding a long-term solution to prevent AIS transfer between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River watersheds; strengthening federal programs to prevent the importation of new invasive species; and supporting the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's sea lamprey control program and other federal and state programs to prevent and control invasive species.***

Sustain the economic and ecological vitality of Great Lakes ports and harbors

The infrastructure that supports commercial navigation and recreational boating in the Great Lakes region must be maintained and upgraded. This is vital for our regional economy and the health of coastal communities. ***Fund maintenance and improvements in commercial ports and recreational harbors, using ecologically protective measures.***

Great Lakes Commission

Great Lakes Commission

HEALTHY LAKES HEALTHY LIVES HEALTHYLAKES.ORG

Healing Our Waters® Great Lakes Coalition

Great Lakes Fishery Commission

Great Lakes Fishery Commission

Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority

CGLI Council of GREAT LAKES INDUSTRIES

Council of Great Lakes Industries

Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition

Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition

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