



# NEWS RELEASE

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## Great Lakes Commission hails President Obama's \$475 million Great Lakes Initiative

**Ann Arbor, Mich.** – President Barack Obama's vision for Great Lakes restoration gained more clarity with the release today of additional detail on a FY10 spending plan for \$475 million in restoration and protection programs for the lakes. The Great Lakes Commission hails the President's new "Great Lakes Restoration Initiative" and the needed funding that it will provide to restore the lakes and kick-start the regional economy.

The Initiative will be led by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) and will target five strategic priorities: aquatic invasive species; toxic pollution and Areas of Concern; nonpoint source pollution and nearshore health; habitat restoration; and monitoring and assessment.

"Now is the time to clean up the Great Lakes," said Illinois Governor Pat Quinn, chairman of the Great Lakes Commission. "I urge Congress to support the President's commitment to clean water by approving funding for this important restoration initiative."

Past planning efforts, including the 2005 Great Lakes Regional Collaboration strategy, have comprehensively identified the lakes' greatest problems. The region is now aligned and unified to tackle them. Under the new initiative, a portion of the \$475 million will be channeled by the U.S. EPA through interagency agreements to support federal programs, and a significant portion is expected to be made available to states, cities, regional organizations and nongovernment organizations.

Studies have indicated that state and municipal governments' contributions to Great Lakes protection programs significantly exceed those of the federal government. Today's proposal is a major step toward filling the gap and matching the spending of the states and cities.

Michigan Lieutenant Governor John Cherry, former chair of the Commission, emphasized that the Great Lakes are a vital asset for our region. "President Obama recognizes that restoring and conserving the lakes will create jobs and strengthen our regional economy," Cherry said. "The President's \$475 million initiative is a wise investment that will provide meaningful benefits for Michigan and the other Great Lakes states."

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### Great Lakes Commission

Gov. Patrick Quinn (IL), Chair; Tim A. Eder, Executive Director

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The economic benefits of Great Lakes restoration have been documented by a study projecting more than \$50 billion in long-term benefits – more than a 2 to 1 return on investment. Last fall a coalition of metropolitan Chambers of Commerce highlighted the need to restore the Great Lakes as part of a larger agenda to create jobs and revitalize the economy in the Great Lakes region.

“The President’s budget and his Great Lakes Restoration Initiative show that now is the time for action,” said Tim Eder, Great Lakes Commission executive director. “If Congress approves the funding request, states, cities and tribes will have additional resources to restore the Great Lakes. We urge Congress to fund this proposal.”

The budget release this week fills in additional details of the \$475 million proposal announced in draft form in February. President Obama’s Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the rest of his Fiscal Year 2010 budget now go to Congress where Appropriations committees will hold hearings starting next week. The Great Lakes states are eager to accelerate their efforts in partnership with the Administration and Congress to further develop joint proposals related to Great Lakes restoration and protection. By working collaboratively, solutions can be developed that best leverage existing resources, efficiently deploy new funding, emphasize on-the-ground actions, minimize paperwork, and ensure transparency and accountability.

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*The Great Lakes Commission, chaired by Illinois Gov. Patrick Quinn, 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.*