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## New York to chair Great Lakes Commission; carp, GLRI highlight discussions

**Toronto, Ontario** – Canada was challenged to provide a similar level of financial commitment to restoration of the Great Lakes at the Great Lakes Commission’s Annual Meeting, which concluded today in Toronto.

In discussions about the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, Cam Davis, senior advisor to U.S. EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson, stressed that EPA is working hard to continue the program beyond the first year, and to expedite funding to local projects. Davis suggested that the Great Lakes region needs a proportionate investment from Canada and suggested one-third to one-half of the investment that has been made by the U.S. federal government, based on Canada’s population of the Great Lakes basin.

James Tierney of New York was elected new chairman of the Commission. Tierney, assistant commissioner of the Division of Water Resources for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, assumes the chairmanship from Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn. Kari Evans Bennett, general counsel to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, was elected vice chair.

“As the federal governments explore enhancements to the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, I request that they continue or substantially increase the long-term funding that is critical to the implementation of the joint national objective to restore the Great Lakes,” Tierney said. “I hope that the Canadian federal government will consider providing funds on par with U.S. Great Lakes protection and restoration programs.”

In other business, the Commission voted to re-establish an Emergency Preparedness Task Force to review the status of response programs for oil and hazardous material spills in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin. The action comes on the heels of the Enbridge oil spill from a ruptured pipeline near Marshall, Mich., which spilled over 800,000 gallons of oil into Talmadge Creek, a tributary to Lake Michigan.

John Goss, recently appointed as Carp Director for the Council on Environmental Quality, highlighted the three prongs of the carp strategy: 1) remove carp; 2) strengthen the barrier system; and 3) make progress on a long-term solution through collaborative research.

Ontario Minister of Natural Resources Linda Jeffrey provided opening remarks to the more than 80 Great Lakes policymakers in attendance. On the issue of the carp, Jeffrey said: “This government supports the efforts of our Canadian and U.S. colleagues to stop the migration of Asian carp into the Great Lakes system. We’re

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### Great Lakes Commission

James Tierney (NY), Chair; Tim A. Eder, Executive Director  
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committed to working as a team to monitor this serious situation and seek effective solutions.”

Dave Ullrich, executive director of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, spoke about a new joint project between the Great Lakes Commission and the Cities Initiative: *Envisioning a Chicago Area Waterway System for the 21st Century*. The project, funded to date by the Joyce Foundation, the Great Lakes Protection Fund and the Mott and Frey foundations, is focused on preventing carp and other aquatic invasive species movement through separation of the Great Lakes and Mississippi watersheds, while improving transportation, water quality, and stormwater and flood management in the Chicago waterways system.

The Commission passed three resolutions: promoting mercury monitoring, research and reduction; advocating for reauthorization of the Federal Food Conservation and Energy Act (Farm Bill) of 2008 to secure strong water quality protections for the Great Lakes; and encouraging Congress to continue and sustain funding for the GLRI, the landmark program established by President Obama in 2009.

Davis encouraged the states to take ownership of the GLRI Action Plan and be mindful of its benchmarks. “We need to build the bridge while we’re driving over it,” Davis said. “It’s important to highlight project starts and end results, and how the GLRI is producing jobs on the state level.”

The Commission will continue its leadership role in working with regional partners, on behalf of the states, to encourage Congress to provide statutory authorization and full funding for the GLRI and other critical programs. The FY2010 appropriation for GLRI was \$475 million. The FY2011 appropriation markup in the House is \$300 million. The five-year pricetag for the program is estimated at \$2.2 billion.

“Through the GLRI, we at last have seen a significant down payment on the resources that we need to protect and restore this special part of the world,” concluded Commission Vice Chair Todd Ambs of Wisconsin, president of River Network. “Let us make sure that we make the most of this moment.”

The Great Lakes Commission will next convene for its annual Great Lakes Days in Washington events on Capitol Hill, March 1-2, 2011.

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*The Great Lakes Commission, chaired by James Tierney (NY), 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](http://www.glc.org).*