



An Agenda for GREAT LAKES RESTORATION AND ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION

Great Lakes Commission Federal Priorities for 2017

An Enduring Priority

The Great Lakes form the backbone of the culture and economy of our eight-state, two-province region. Restoring, protecting and wisely managing them is an enduring, bipartisan priority for the people of the Great Lakes region and their elected leaders. With nearly one-third of U.S. and Canadian economic activity centered in the Great Lakes region and 95% of our nation's fresh surface water, bolstering this invaluable resource is a wise strategy that benefits our nation as a whole.

The investments we are making in the Great Lakes—whether for maritime transportation, waterfront economic development or environmental cleanup—are creating jobs, protecting public health and revitalizing struggling communities. The Great Lakes states are leading this important work in collaboration with local communities, tribes, business and industry, and conservation organizations. Representing the Great Lakes states and provinces—**Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Ontario, Pennsylvania, Québec and Wisconsin**—the Great Lakes Commission offers these priorities to continue the progress we are making in leveraging the Great Lakes as a vital economic and environmental asset for our nation.

The VALUE of the GREAT LAKES



95%
of our nation's supply
of fresh surface water



**\$5 trillion regional
economy and 30% of
U.S. and Canadian
economic activity**

**Drinking water for
48 million people**



**\$52 billion
recreational economy
from fishing, hunting
and boating**

**1.5 million jobs
and \$60 billion in
wages annually**



**Maritime system
contributing \$30 billion
to the U.S. and
Canadian economies**

A Leadership Agenda for the Great Lakes

- **Invest in water infrastructure** to safeguard drinking water, rebuild failing wastewater systems, support business and industry, and help revitalize communities.
- **Strengthen the Great Lakes navigation system** by upgrading locks, ports and related infrastructure and ensuring dredging to keep waterways open to commerce.
- **Advance the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in coordination with the Great Lakes states** and other partners to maintain and accelerate cleanup, restoration and recovery of North America's greatest freshwater natural and economic resource.
- **Maintain robust, coordinated programs to protect the Great Lakes from Asian carp** and other aquatic invasive species.
- **Coordinate and strategically target agricultural conservation programs to prevent polluted runoff** that contributes to harmful algal blooms.
- **Manage data and information to guide Great Lakes investments**, track progress and ensure accountability.
- **Provide effective coordination of federal agencies**, ensure their programs are aligned with efforts of state and local partners, and appoint a senior Great Lakes director to ensure efficiency.



■ MODERNIZE WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Invest in water infrastructure to safeguard drinking water, rebuild failing wastewater systems, support business and industry, and help revitalize communities.

Our access to safe Great Lakes water is threatened by failing water infrastructure, lead in drinking water lines, toxic algae, sewage overflows from overburdened wastewater systems, and impacts from climate change. The Great Lakes Commission calls for increased federal investment to complement state and local programs to improve and manage all water infrastructure—drinking water, stormwater and wastewater. This should include support for the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund programs and new approaches such as the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA). The federal Lead and Copper Rule should be updated and federal agencies should collaborate with state and local agencies to strengthen standards and monitoring practices to detect toxic algae and safeguard drinking water supplies.

■ STRENGTHEN COMMERCIAL NAVIGATION

Strengthen the Great Lakes navigation system by upgrading locks, ports and related infrastructure and ensuring dredging to keep waterways open to commerce.

The Great Lakes Commission calls for policies, programs and projects needed to grow the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River maritime transportation system and boost trade, create jobs and enhance the global competitiveness of our regional economy. Key actions include full use of monies paid into the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund and dedicated funding for the Great Lakes; dredging to maintain channels and harbors; direction from the Army Corps of Engineers to manage the Great Lakes as a single, integrated navigation system; new options to reduce the need for disposing of dredged material in the open waters of the Great Lakes; and continued work to build a new large lock at Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., which is critical to our national security and regional economy. The Commission supports the strategy developed by the Conference of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers that aims to double maritime trade, improve environmental performance and support the region's industrial core.



■ SUSTAIN RESTORATION

Advance the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in coordination with Congress and state and local governments to maintain and accelerate cleanup, restoration and recovery of North America's greatest freshwater resource.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) has generated unprecedented progress in restoring the largest system of fresh surface water in the world. The Great Lakes Commission urges the President to request and Congress to approve \$300 million for the GLRI in FY 2018, with a focus on cleaning up heavily degraded Areas of Concern and other contaminated sites, stopping Asian carp and other invasive species, preventing polluted runoff that causes toxic algae, and restoring habitat for valuable fish and wildlife resources. Continued funding for the Initiative will build on our investments and help the region advance long-term goals for a healthy economy, sustained by a revitalized ecosystem.



PHOTOS Cover, left to right: Cleveland, Ohio, on Lake Erie ©flickr/Tim Evanson; fishing for muskellunge (muskie) in Wisconsin ©Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources; the bulk carrier *John G. Munson* in Lake Superior's Duluth Harbor, Duluth, Minnesota, ©flickr/Paul Gravestock. **This page, top to bottom:** drinking fountain ©flickr/Jeremy Verinsky; the bulk carrier *Cason J. Callaway* in the Soo Locks, Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, ©U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Detroit District; Mt. Baldy restoration project work at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, Michigan City, Indiana, ©Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore by Jeff Manuszak. **Next page, top to bottom:** Asian carp ©U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; algae in Lake Erie as seen from Ohio State University's Stone Laboratory, Gibraltar Island, Ohio, ©Brenda Culler, Ohio Department of Natural Resources Coastal Management; riverfront development in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on the Milwaukee River ©flickr/Ian Freimuth.



■ PROTECT AGAINST INVASIVE SPECIES

Maintain robust, coordinated programs to protect the Great Lakes from Asian carp and other aquatic invasive species.

Strong federal leadership is needed to prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) that threaten the environmental and economic health of the Great Lakes. The President and Congress should support successful programs established under the National Invasive Species Act, including the national task force, regional panels and state management plans; provide funding for the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's sea lamprey control program; and strengthen federal programs to prevent the importation of harmful non-native species. Continued actions by federal and state partners under the Asian Carp Action Plan are vital to keeping these destructive invasive species out of the Great Lakes. The Army Corps of Engineers should complete a plan for preventing Asian carp from moving through the Brandon Road Lock and Dam in Joliet, Illinois, so it can be reviewed by the Great Lakes states and other interested parties. A comprehensive, long-term solution to prevent all AIS from transferring between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River watersheds is still needed.

■ TARGET CONSERVATION ACTIONS

Coordinate and strategically target agricultural conservation programs to prevent polluted runoff that causes harmful algal blooms.

Harmful algal blooms are a growing threat to public health, drinking water safety and local economies, particularly in vulnerable areas such as Western Lake Erie, Saginaw Bay and Green Bay. The Great Lakes Commission calls for strategic targeting of federal conservation programs to prevent the runoff of nutrients, fertilizers and other chemicals from agricultural lands that can pollute rivers and streams and contribute to harmful algal blooms. Federal programs should complement the leadership of the Governors and Premiers through the Western Basin of Lake Erie Collaborative Agreement. The federal harmful algal bloom coordinator, called for by Congress, should be empowered to improve the effectiveness of federal investments in collaboration with the Great Lakes states and other partners.



■ MANAGE INFORMATION

Manage data and information to guide Great Lakes investments, track progress and ensure accountability.

The Great Lakes Commission calls on federal agencies to manage and share data and information to guide investments and measure progress toward common goals for the Great Lakes. The Commission is implementing a Blue Accounting initiative together with The Nature Conservancy to provide Great Lakes leaders with information to assess progress toward desired outcomes for environmental, economic and social priorities. Expertise and collaboration from federal agencies is needed for the success of this initiative.

■ LEAD EFFECTIVELY

Provide effective coordination of federal agencies, ensure their programs are aligned with efforts of state and local partners, and appoint a senior Great Lakes director to ensure efficiency.

To help achieve our priorities for the Great Lakes regional economy and environment, maintain robust structures to coordinate federal programs and activities and ensure they are deployed efficiently and coordinated consistently with state and local efforts. This includes a dedicated, senior-level Great Lakes director; a Great Lakes Interagency Task Force to coordinate federal agency actions; a Great Lakes Advisory Board to provide recommendations from non-federal stakeholders; an Action Plan to strategically target restoration efforts and measure progress; and annual reports to Congress to ensure accountability. These structures will sustain progress and ensure the sound use of federal and state resources.





Voices from the Great Lakes

Great Lakes water infrastructure is a vital piece of the foundation for a strong economy and healthy communities. Sustained and strategic investments will help continue the comeback of our cities, protect public health, support economic prosperity, sustain agriculture and fuel the future of the Great Lakes region and the entire nation.

Hon. Rick Snyder, Governor, State of Michigan

Commercial navigation on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River contributes more than \$30 billion to the U.S. and Canadian economies. It's an absolute necessity that we maintain and strengthen this critical component of our nation's economic infrastructure.

Mark Barker, President, Interlake Steamship Co.

Lake Erie is an economic engine for Ohio, generating nearly \$13 billion in tourism sales and 120,000 jobs. Ohio's charter boat industry is the largest in North America, fueled by a \$1.5 billion sport fishery. It's vital that we protect this economic asset from threats such as harmful algal blooms and invasive species.

Captain Paul Pacholski, President, Lake Erie Charter Boat Association

One of the world's greatest natural resources sits in the middle of our region—the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes are a major economic force, and protecting them is critical for ongoing job creation and economic development. Enhancing the quality of the Great Lakes and maximizing their economic impact will continue to be priorities for the members of the Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition.

Brad Williams, Executive Director, Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition

Restoring the Buffalo River is a key element of our city's economic and environmental revitalization. Great Lakes Restoration Initiative investments in dredging and living infrastructure, paired with upland recreation and commercial development, have transformed the once "dead" Buffalo River into the city's most active waterfront destination.

Hon. Byron W. Brown, Mayor, City of Buffalo



Unity Island, site of the GLRI-funded Unity Island Aquatic and Riparian Invasive Species Management and Habitat Restoration Project in Buffalo, New York, ©U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Buffalo District.

About the Great Lakes Commission The Great Lakes Commission was established by the Great Lakes states in 1955 to coordinate management of the water resources of the Great Lakes basin and to represent the states' interests on Great Lakes matters before the federal government. Based in Ann Arbor, Mich., the Commission promotes the concept that a healthy environment and prosperous economy should be mutually dependent, not exclusive, goals. With appointees from the eight states and two Canadian provinces, the Commission serves as a forum for the development of regional policy and as an advocate for legislation and programs to benefit the Great Lakes. The Canadian provinces of Ontario and Québec participate in all Commission deliberations and activities as associate members.



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