



RESOLUTION

Adopted October 14, 2021

Promoting Climate Resilience in the Great Lakes Basin

Whereas, the Great Lakes sustain a \$6 trillion economy, contain more than 90% of North America’s supply of surface freshwater, and provide drinking water for more than 40 million people in the United States and Canada; and

Whereas, the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin supports vital industries for the United States and Canada; and

Whereas, the economic prosperity and wellbeing of people living in all communities, including environmental justice and under-resourced communities, within the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River region is inextricably tied to the health and vitality of shared waters and natural resources; and

Whereas, the vital habitats, native species, and ecosystems surrounding the Great Lakes are valuable in their own right; and

Whereas, the Great Lakes basin ecosystems, native species, habitat, and biodiversity provide important ecological functions including, but not limited to, flood control, water purification, and crop pollination; and

Whereas, changes in climate, including more frequent and higher intensity storm events, increased cyclical variability of lake levels, higher temperatures and more frequent heat waves, polar vortices and more extreme ice events, drought, and other varying conditions continue to affect the people, places, economy, and environment of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River region, including increased risks to public health, agriculture, maritime navigation, public infrastructure, private property, biota, commercial and recreational fishing, shorelines and coastal zones, and ongoing restoration efforts; and

Whereas, the effects of a changing climate are not distributed equally, causing frontline communities and under-resourced communities to experience greater impacts due to their subsistent, economic, and cultural relationship with threatened natural resources and variations in investment in infrastructure; and

Whereas, resiliency efforts and the deployment of adaptation strategies are critical to the common protection and promotion of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River region and its shared waters, natural resources, residents and economy; and

Whereas, government and non-government entities engaged in the protection, restoration and use of the Great Lakes and its resources are members of the “Great Lakes community,” including the U.S. federal government, Canadian federal government, state governments, provincial governments, municipal authorities, non-governmental organizations, private sector organizations, academia, Tribal Governments, First Nations and provincially recognized Métis communities; and

Whereas, all members of the Great Lakes community have a role to play in securing a more resilient Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin, and many are engaged in important ongoing efforts that include funding and executing fundamental research, modeling, risk-assessment and forecasting; development of tools and training resources; the

development of resiliency metrics; and implementing science-informed projects and programs to make the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin more resilient to a changing climate; and

Whereas, the Great Lakes Commission, established by the Great Lakes Basin Compact of 1955, serves an important role in convening members of the Great Lakes community to discuss and coordinate around issues of regional concern; and

Whereas, the Great Lakes Commission established a Standing Committee on Climate Resilience in January 2020, which provides a forum for states, provinces, and other stakeholders to share knowledge and information, develop goals, coordinate efforts, and track progress to secure a more resilient Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin through common understanding and collaborative action; and

Whereas, the Standing Committee on Climate Resilience has identified several vulnerabilities of pressing concern, including threats to water quality and drinking water, as well as coastal flooding and erosion, and urban and riverine flooding, that can be addressed by enhanced shoreline management, naturalized stream management and green infrastructure projects.

Therefore, be it resolved, the Great Lakes Commission adopt a common definition of climate resilience, which states:

A resilient Great Lakes basin is one in which communities, infrastructure, ecosystems, and the economy can withstand, adapt to, and recover from climate-related stressors and changing conditions to ensure equitable and inclusive social, economic, and environmental well-being across the basin.

Be it further resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission, through the work of its Standing Committee on Climate Resilience, facilitate and release an action plan for a resilient Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin that includes the input and expertise from across the Great Lakes community and is uniquely designed to guide Commission actions, foster broader collaborations or partnerships, and to advance resiliency objectives throughout the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin; and

Be it further resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission work with its partners to address opportunities related to coastal resilience, including consideration of climate resilience factors in evaluating the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of Great Lakes natural resources, implementation of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study to develop a collaborative, risk-based decision framework that identifies opportunities to improve coastal resilience in the region, and collaboration with the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative to address findings and recommendations from its Coastal Resilience Needs Assessment Survey and Mayors Advisory Council on Coastal Resilience; and

Be it further resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission engage its Regional Water Infrastructure Working Group to incorporate resiliency into the development of its blueprint for improved water infrastructure services; and

Be it further resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission, through the work of its Standing Committee on Climate Resilience, explore the status of resilience in the Great Lakes basin and identify areas of opportunities that could support resiliency efforts including studies, data, tools, guidance and other resources; and

Be it further resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission work with the Great Lakes community to identify opportunities for greater multi-jurisdictional and cross-sector collaboration, coordinate complementary efforts at a regional level while minimizing duplication, and highlight and leverage the many individual efforts in each jurisdiction; and

*Adopted at the 2021 Annual Meeting of the Great Lakes Commission, October 12-14, 2021, held online.
The resolution was passed unanimously.*

Be it further resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission support the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River states and provinces in efforts to build collective resilience, in both the natural and built environments, and deploy strategies to respond to and reduce climate-related risks; and

Be it finally resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission calls on the federal governments of the United States and Canada to expand upon existing actions, in close consultation with state and provincial efforts, to understand and address the various climate-related risks posed to the Great Lakes basin.

*Adopted at the 2021 Annual Meeting of the Great Lakes Commission, October 12-14, 2021, held online.
The resolution was passed unanimously.*