

RESOLUTION  
Adopted October 10, 2019

## Support for Congressional Reauthorization of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

**Whereas**, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River are national treasures and environmental and economic assets of vital importance to the eight Great Lakes states, Ontario, Québec and two nations; and

**Whereas**, benefits from the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River continue to be threatened by the release of inadequately treated sewage, invasive species, toxic contaminants, degraded waterfront areas, deteriorating water infrastructure and inadequately maintained ports and harbors; and

**Whereas**, priorities established in 2003 by the governors of the eight Great Lakes states provided the foundation on which the region came together to develop the *Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes*, a comprehensive restoration plan that has been broadly endorsed by the Great Lakes governors, states, cities, industries, tribal governments, federal agencies and environmental organizations; and

**Whereas**, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) was initiated in 2009 to strategically target the most critical problems facing the Great Lakes, including

- Toxic substances and Areas of Concern
- Invasive species
- Nonpoint source pollution impacts on nearshore health
- Habitat and species
- Foundations for future restoration actions; and

**Whereas**, the GLRI has established key components for an effective restoration program, including a detailed Action Plan with clear performance goals, an accountability system, and a funding plan that strategically aligns existing programs with those goals; and

**Whereas**, the Great Lakes region – including states, cities, tribes, business and industry, and nongovernmental groups – have invested significant time and resources to build the capacity to implement the GLRI and translate regional goals into site-specific actions that generate real benefits for local communities; and

**Whereas**, the Great Lakes states are critical partners in the success of the GLRI with the best knowledge and experience to ensure that resources are targeted at local priorities and several of the Great Lakes states have adopted Great Lakes restoration strategies and plans to complement federal restoration activities in their states; and

**Whereas**, the GLRI has supported the implementation of more than 4,700 projects across 300,000 square miles, generating significant progress, including completing cleanup work in 11 Areas of Concern, implementing conservation treatments on more than 700,000 acres of farmland and preventing more than 800,000 pounds of phosphorous from polluting the Great Lakes and contributing to harmful algal blooms, opening more than 5,000 miles of rivers to fish passage to improve native fish populations, and funding actions to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species like Asian Carp that threaten the health of these freshwater jewels; and

**Whereas**, Great Lakes restoration is a wise investment in the region's economy that is facilitating economic development in waterfront communities across the region, with one rigorous economic analysis projecting that every dollar invested under the GLRI will generate more than three dollars in additional economic activity over the next two decades; and

**Whereas**, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) is finalizing a new, five-year GLRI Action plan to guide the program through Fiscal Year 2024 that establishes ambitious goals to sustain restoration progress in the GLRI's five focus areas; and

**Whereas**, significant work remains to achieve regional restoration goals for the Great Lakes, including completing cleanup work in 19 remaining U.S. Areas of Concern, achieving phosphorous reduction goals for Lake Erie and implementing conservation actions on ten million acres estimated by U.S. EPA as needing financial assistance, restoring 1.5 million acres of habitat, and preventing the introduction and spread of harmful invasive species; and

**Whereas**, the Great Lakes Basin's states and communities are prepared to begin planning and investing in the future of stewardship, development and continued conservation of the Basin after its successful restoration; and

**Whereas**, Congress has consistently supported the GLRI with annual appropriations of approximately \$300 million, and in 2016 formally authorized the program through Fiscal Year 2021; and

**Whereas**, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee has passed the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2019, which increases the authorized funding level for the program over five years from \$300 million to \$475 million per year; and

**Whereas**, the Great Lakes Basin Compact authorizes the Great Lakes Commission to advocate on behalf of the eight Great Lakes states in support of issues of common interest and, using this authority, the Commission has been a leading voice for full funding of the GLRI, and has advised Congress and federal agencies on principles for its implementation in a manner consistent with the views and priorities of the Great Lakes states.

**Therefore, Be It Resolved**, the Great Lakes Commission calls on Congress to continue funding the GLRI, develop clear shared objectives for GLRI investments, maintain the momentum made to date, build on investments made by the Great Lakes states and other partners, improve the objective accountability for investments in the Great Lakes Basin, and facilitate the long-term success of regional restoration efforts; and

**Be It Further Resolved**, the Great Lakes Commission calls on Congress to reauthorize the GLRI through FY 2026 and increase the authorized funding level to the first year's appropriation of \$475 million to provide U.S. EPA, the Great Lakes states, and other parties with the flexibility to address remaining restoration needs, leverage funding from nonfederal partners, and implement priority projects and programs to safeguard the environmental and economic health of the Great Lakes; and

**Be It Finally Resolved**, the Great Lakes Commission commends U.S. EPA and the other federal agencies for their dedication and hard work in implementing the GLRI and urges continued collaboration with the Great Lakes states to sustain its accountability and effectiveness, including planning for future needs and post-restoration investments.