



## RESOLUTION

Adopted October 14, 2021

# U.S. Federal Investments to Improve Great Lakes Infrastructure

**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**, investments in water infrastructure, commercial navigation, environmental restoration, and resilience will create jobs, foster equity for underserved communities, and strengthen the economic and environmental health of the Great Lakes region for future generations; and

**Whereas**, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) remains a critically important program for the economic and environmental revitalization of the Great Lakes basin; and

**Whereas**, federal investments through GLRI have demonstrated a significant return on investment, with every dollar spent generating an estimated \$3.35 in additional economic activity; and

**Whereas**, the eight Great Lakes states face a significant project backlog to maintain and upgrade drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure, which has a disproportionate effect on the health of underserved communities; and

**Whereas**, the American Water Works Association indicates more than 6 million complete or partial lead service lines remain in operation in the United States alone, serving 15 million to 22 million people; and

**Whereas**, the Great Lakes region contains the highest concentrations of lead service lines in the United States; and

**Whereas**, the U.S. EPA estimates that fixing, updating and modernizing the region's crumbling water infrastructure will cost up to \$188 billion over the next 20 years, and that backlog grows every year that we fail to invest in our nation's water infrastructure; and

**Whereas**, the replacement and upgrading of existing drinking water and wastewater infrastructure is essential to providing healthy water to residents across the entire Great Lakes region; and

**Whereas**, in the 1970's, about two-thirds of funding for water and wastewater infrastructure in the United States came from the federal government, versus only about 9% today – primarily in the form of state revolving loan fund capitalization grants; and

**Whereas**, investing in water infrastructure will address longstanding needs while creating jobs, fostering equity, protecting public health, and strengthening local economies; and

**Whereas**, communities across the Great Lakes basin are heavily impacted by erosion, flooding and other effects from high lake levels and extreme weather events; and

**Whereas**, investments in shoreline resilience will enable Great Lakes states and localities to prepare for, respond to, and build resilience to current and future impacts from high lake levels and severe weather events; and

**Whereas**, investments in shoreline resilience are estimated to return more than \$6 for every \$1 spent, and create 39 jobs for every \$1 million spent, demonstrating a high rate of job creation and an excellent return on investment for taxpayers; and

**Whereas**, the Great Lakes Navigation System is a critical component of global supply chains and connects Great Lakes communities to the world economy, supporting nearly 240,000 jobs and generating more than \$35 billion in economic activity in the United States and Canada; and

**Whereas**, investments in the Great Lakes Navigation System will create jobs and modernize an important sector of regional economy; and

**Whereas**, the navigation locks in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan are the single point of failure for the Great Lakes Navigation System and the industries it supports.

**Therefore, be it resolved**, the Great Lakes Commission calls on the U.S. Congress to expeditiously enact infrastructure legislation that:

- Increases federal funding for the GLRI above and beyond the current authorized amount;
- Increases federal funding for important water infrastructure programs such as the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, Clean Water State Revolving Fund, the Water Infrastructure Finance Innovation Act, Sewer Overflow and Stormwater Reuse Municipal Grant program, and programs intended to replace lead service lines and address PFAS contamination;
- Prioritizes projects and programs in underserved communities that advance equitable access to affordable, clean, safe drinking water;
- Provides funding for full lead service line replacement and asks the federal governments for increased funding to implement these plans in concerned jurisdictions. Funding mechanisms should benefit consumers served by lead service lines in an equitable manner;
- Increases federal funding for programs that build coastal resilience, including, but not limited to the *Safeguarding Tomorrow through Ongoing Risk Mitigation (STORM) Act* grants, NOAA's Coastal Zone Management Program, National Ocean and Coastal Security Fund, Army Corps of Engineers Flood Risk Management and Ecosystem Restoration authorities; and
- Increases federal funding for programs that enhance the Great Lakes Navigation System, such as the Port Infrastructure Development Program, complete construction of the new Soo Lock using the work plan for funding from the American Jobs Act, maintenance and modernization of the existing Soo Locks, elimination of the regional dredging backlog, and repair and rehabilitation of Great Lakes navigation structures, including breakwaters and jetties.

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