



## RESOLUTION

Adopted June 9, 2022

# Safeguarding Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Water Resources Through the Support of U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Programs and Partnerships

**Whereas**, clean and abundant supplies of freshwater are vital to the future of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River and the protection of these resources is a top priority of the region's governors and premiers, the states and provinces, and the U.S. and Canadian federal governments; and

**Whereas**, water quantity and quality are impacted by a variety of activities such as land use, aquatic invasive species, climate change, residential, industrial and agricultural water use, altered flow regimes in rivers and streams, and groundwater extraction; and

**Whereas**, the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River states and provinces rely heavily on federal agency programs, and support and benefit from partnerships with federal agencies, such as the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), that help ensure the protection of the region's freshwater resources; and

**Whereas**, the USGS — as the largest water, earth, biological science, and civilian mapping agency in the United States — collects, monitors, analyzes, and provides scientific information about water natural resources that is important to the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River region; and

**Whereas**, the USGS partners closely with states, to carry out large-scale, multidisciplinary investigations and supporting impartial scientific information exchange to a variety of stakeholders; and

**Whereas**, USGS streamgage information assists the Great Lakes states in carrying out critical activities including forecasting extreme stream flow and water level events, tracking and forecasting climate change trends and projections, supporting infrastructure design and capacity for roads, bridges, dams and coastal structures and completing water-quality assessments of major rivers, lakes, reservoirs and estuaries to inform TMDL development, among others, and

**Whereas**, USGS Cooperative Matching Funds (CMF) support joint projects with state, regional, tribal, and local partners to provide reliable, impartial, and timely information needed to understand and manage the nation's water resources; and

**Whereas**, the USGS CMF, the Federal Priority Streamgages (FPS), the Next Generation Water Observing System (NGWOS), and the National Groundwater Monitoring Network (NGWMN), are especially important to the Great Lakes states because they support evaluation and implementation of high priority programs such as the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact and Sustainable Water Resources Agreement, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, and the binational Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) Annex subcommittees; and

**Whereas**, the CMF is a funding mechanism that is designed to bring local, state, and tribal water science needs and decisionmaking together with USGS national capabilities to promote consistent methods and quality assurance for data collection and reporting, innovative monitoring technology, modeling and analysis, and more robust data management and delivery systems; and

**Whereas**, CMF projects are funded jointly (e.g., requiring a nonfederal match of at least 50%) with state and local governments and other cooperators, and provide science and monitoring that is mutually advantageous to the USGS, states, tribes, and communities; and

**Whereas**, the CMF has seen flat funding or slight decreases in funding over the past several years, which has resulted in the need for the local (nonfederal) sponsor share of funding to steadily increase to maintain the gaging networks; and

**Whereas**, the FPS network, consisting of 155 active streamgages and 50 inactive sites in the Great Lakes basin, is supported jointly by direct USGS program contributions, along with regional, state, and local cooperator match, and other federal agency contributions; and

**Whereas**, the appropriated budget for the FPS Network which includes 4,760 stream gages throughout the country, has been flat since 2016, yet operational costs have grown by approximately 1-3% per year, causing the discontinuation of some streamgages in 2021 with more planned for 2022; and

**Whereas**, streamgages will continue to be lost in the Great Lakes and across the nation, along with the long-term data that cannot be recreated, unless FPS appropriations increase; and

**Whereas**, in FY2021, only 35% of active FPS gages were funded solely by the USGS FPS appropriations, requiring other federal agencies and nonfederal partners to fund (or partially fund) the rest of the FPSs; and

**Whereas**, the Secure Water Title (Title F) of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 ([P.L. 111-11](#)) authorizes funding for the programs described above including the FPS (formerly the National Streamflow Information Program), the NGWMN, and a grants program to assist states in developing water use and availability datasets; and

**Whereas**, full funding for the Secure Water Title of P.L. 111-11 has not been realized, causing a shortfall in funding and the increased reliance on other funding partners and sources to support the majority of gages in the FPS network.

**Therefore, Be It Resolved**, that the Great Lakes Commission values the strong partnership between the states and USGS and the resulting continued progress in protecting the quality and quantity of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River water resources; and

**Be It Further Resolved**, that the Great Lakes Commission acknowledges the importance of the CMF, the FPS, and the NGWMN to help state agencies better manage their water resources; and

**Be it Further Resolved**, that the Great Lakes Commission supports the NGWOS and efforts to modernize the USGS networks; and

**Be It Further Resolved**, that the Great Lakes Commission offers its assistance to USGS to develop new partnerships and identify additional cooperators to help keep all of the at-risk streamgages operating; and

**Be It Further Resolved**, that the Great Lakes Commission supports full funding of the FSP, which is estimated to be \$130 million annually, to implement and maintain the full network of approximately 4,760 flood hardened streamgages across the United States, and an increase in the CMF with a goal to return the cost share to 50-50 and reduce the burden on state and local governments; and

**Be It Further Resolved**, that the Great Lakes Commission supports the implementation of Sec. 9508 (c) of P.L 111-11 that provides grants to states to help them improve their water use data collection and reporting programs; and

**Be It Finally Resolved**, that the Great Lakes Commission calls upon Congress to fully fund the Secure Water Title (Title F) of P.L. 111-11 to assure the continued protection of the freshwater resources of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River.

*Adopted at the 2022 Semiannual Meeting of the Great Lakes Commission, June 7-9, 2022,  
held in Green Bay, Wisconsin. The resolution was passed unanimously.*