



2024 Annual Report



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Wade Strickland

Director of the Office of Great Waters,
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Board of Directors as of December 2024.

Cover photo: Sleeping Bear Dunes National
Lakeshore on Lake Michigan in Empire, Michigan.
This page: Bruce Peninsula, Georgian Bay on Lake
Huron in Ontario, Canada.



A Message from the Executive Director

Recognizing that healthy and productive Great Lakes are critical for our region, the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin signed the Great Lakes Basin Compact of 1955. The Compact called for “orderly, integrated, and comprehensive development, use, and conservation of the water resources” of the Great Lakes and created a binational government agency – the Great Lakes Commission – to serve as a binational, nonpartisan agency convener on Great Lakes issues.

For nearly seven decades since, the Great Lakes Commission (GLC) has brought together representatives from local, state, provincial, Indigenous and federal governments; private sector and nongovernment organizations; academic institutions and other organizations to work on issues that no entity can tackle alone.

2024 marked another successful year for the GLC, as we move closer to celebrating our 70th anniversary in fall 2025. Productive collaboration with our federal, Indigenous, state, and local partners remains our top priority, with a highlight of the year coming as the GLC signed the first-ever memorandum of understanding with the International Joint Commission and Great Lakes Fishery Commission. Each commission plays a different but complementary role in Great Lakes management and represents important stakeholders in advancing sound policies and projects. Our new agreement set a clear path for advancing the commissions’ existing shared goals and objectives, such as developing a Great Lakes science plan, coordinating science vessel activities, and promoting annual Great Lakes Day events. The GLC is looking forward to building upon our decades of coordination with the IJC and

A highlight of the year: The Great Lakes Commission signed the first-ever memorandum of understanding with the International Joint Commission and Great Lakes Fishery Commission

GLFC to further a strong regional economy and healthy environment, and to achieve the balanced and sustainable use of Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin water resources.

We were further excited about the opportunity to partner with the IJC and the Great Lakes Sea Grant Network to support three Great Lakes Fellows. The recent graduates are coordinating community engagement activities for the Great Lakes Science Plan. Their work will help ensure the plan reflects and supports the needs of local communities and Indigenous Nations from around the Great Lakes.



Left to right, seated: Marc Gaden, Executive Secretary, Great Lakes Fishery Commission; Heather Stirratt, Director, Great Lakes Regional Office, International Joint Commission; and Erika Jensen, Executive Director, Great Lakes Commission, signing the first-ever memorandum of understanding between the three commissions.

Another exciting regional development came in July, when the states of Illinois and Michigan and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers signed a project partnership agreement (PPA) for the Brandon Road Interbasin Project. This project, which was originally authorized in 2020, is a key component of the region's longstanding efforts to protect the Great Lakes from invasive carp. The GLC has worked for over 30 years on efforts to prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species, including support for the Brandon Road project. Since 2019, we have convened the Brandon Road States and Provinces Forum, which continues to serve as an important venue for information-sharing and problem-solving.

This year the GLC also expanded two of our long-standing and highly respected regional partnerships, issuing new grant opportunities under our Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program (GLSNRP) as well as the *Phragmites* Adaptive Management Framework. In total, the GLC passed through \$1.326 million in funding to partners across the region via GLSNRP and *Phragmites* projects to restore coastal habitat, prevent invasive species, and improve water quality.

In 2025, we look forward to celebrating the Great Lakes Commission's 70th anniversary with you at our Annual Meeting in Duluth, Minnesota, and to many more years of working together to promote the orderly, integrated, and comprehensive development, use, and conservation of the water resources of the Great Lakes basin. ■

Erika Jensen

Erika S. Jensen
Executive Director



Rock excavated from the river channel for construction of the Brandon Road Interbasin Project near Joliet, Illinois, is unloaded from a barge and placed into trucks for use in another area of the project.
Photo ©U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District.

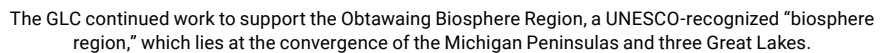


In 2024, the Great Lakes *Phragmites* Collaborative's *Phragmites* Adaptive Management Framework (PAMF) awarded grants to 17 local organizations in the region to improve *Phragmites* management across the Great Lakes basin and beyond.



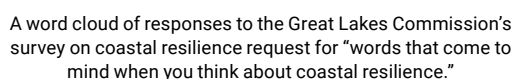
An example of Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program grantee work in progress (left) and completed (right) in New York by the Ontario County Soil and Water Conservation District as part of a multi-county effort to increase farm resiliency to storm runoff events and protect water quality.

At our 2024 Semiannual Meeting, the GLC adopted a policy resolution establishing a



GLC staff also continued work to support the Obtawa-Biosphere Region, a UNESCO-recognized “biosphere region,” which lies at the convergence of the Michigan Peninsulas and three Great Lakes, in developing a regional coastal resilience plan and creating a platform for regional data sharing.

For more than 30 years, Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program (GLSNRP) grants coordinated by the GLC have allowed local and state governments, Indigenous Nations, and nonprofit organizations to keep sediment and nutrients out of the Great Lakes basin, including by funding innovative and unique practices not eligible





Participants gather at the Harmful Algal Blooms Science and Policy Workshop in Maumee Bay State Park on Lake Erie in Lucas County, Ohio.

for other federal cost-share programs. A new GLSNRP grant program launched in 2024 took this work a step further by supporting conservation districts in deploying the Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework, which helps farming communities reduce sediment and nutrient pollution using high-resolution geo-spatial data. Additionally, the GLC hosted the second GLSNRP Dialogues in August 2024. This event brought together grantees and partners to inform decision-making for the program and other nutrient reduction efforts.

In 2024, the GLC also launched new work to identify obstacles that limit the effectiveness of Soil and Water Conservation Districts across the Great Lakes region, with a particular focus on recruiting and retaining the next generation of conservation professionals.

Sustainable and Equitable Water Use

In 2024, the GLC released an updated Great Lakes Water Use Database website that is more secure and easier to access for the public. For nearly 40 years, the eight states and two provinces in the

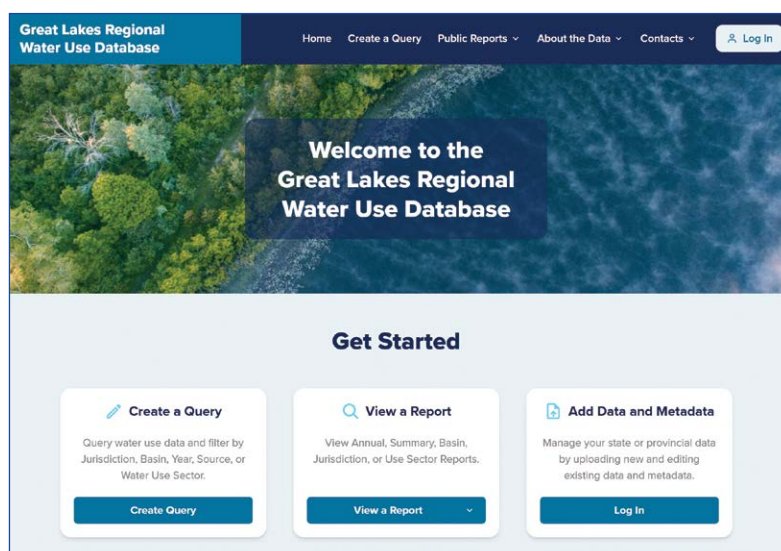
Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin have provided water use data to the database, which is managed by the GLC. Upgrades to the site included a streamlined, more intuitive process for water use data managers to report their jurisdictions' data and metadata; an improved public-facing tool that will allow users to create charts based on their specific data selections; and enhanced security features to better protect data before it is published. More than 30 million people in the basin rely on the Great Lakes

for drinking water, jobs, industry and more. The new site will help regional decision-makers better manage our water resources responsibly for all basin residents.

Safe and Reliable Waterways

In 2024, the GLC was excited to add new staff capacity to work on Great Lakes maritime transportation policy. The GLC also continued to serve on the organizing committee for the

Great Lakes Dredging Team, a forum for governmental and nongovernmental Great Lakes dredging interests to discuss the region's dredging needs. Additionally, GLC continued its support to the U.S. Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation and the Canadian St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation, in their efforts to facilitate a Great Lakes Green Shipping Corridor Network and received updates



In 2024, the GLC released an updated Great Lakes Water Use Database website that is more secure and easier to access for the public. Visit the database at waterusedata.glc.org.

on federal investments and advancements in clean maritime initiatives at the GLC semiannual meeting in Washington, D.C.

Healthy Aquatic Ecosystems

The GLC continues to work closely with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to implement habitat restoration projects in priority coastal areas across the Great Lakes basin. As of 2024, the NOAA-GLC partnership has delivered more than \$70 million in funding to 45 multi-phase projects in eight priority areas across the



The M/V AlgoCanada navigating the Detroit River near Detroit, Michigan. The GLC continues to support the U.S. Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation and the Canadian St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation in their efforts to facilitate a Great Lakes Green Shipping Corridor Network.

region. These projects improve water quality, support fisheries and wildlife, help protect against storms and erosion, enhance recreational opportunities, and increase the resilience of coastal communities.

In 2024, GLC staff also continued to support our portfolio of aquatic invasive species (AIS) collaboratives, hosting in-person meetings for the Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species, Invasive Mussel Collaborative, developing a new regional strategy for European frog-bit management, and delivering *Phragmites* management guidance to 82 active management units across the basin. The GLC also initiated the first cycle of a new program that will improve *Phragmites* management across the Great Lakes basin and beyond, distributing more than \$239,000 to

support local organizations in implementing certain combinations of management actions on which data is lacking. Information gathered by participants will improve guidance on management practices that are most likely to be effective in controlling invasive *Phragmites*.

In June and July 2024, the GLC coordinated the sixth annual Great Lakes AIS Landing Blitz. During this regional event, volunteers demonstrated to boaters and others how to prevent the spread of AIS, how to identify AIS, and how to report



EUROPEAN FROG-BIT COLLABORATIVE Regional Strategy 2024–2026				
				
MISSION Our mission is to minimize impacts of EFB within the Great Lakes ecosystem and economy through EFB prevention, detection, and control efforts and by identifying research needs. The Collaborative will work to strengthen international coordination and collaboration among stakeholders and build consensus on next steps for European frog-bit detection, prevention, management, and research.				
TIMELINE Regional strategy developed for January 2024–December 2026. Objectives to be completed by the end of the implementation period unless otherwise stated.				
FOCUS AREA	REGIONAL COORDINATION & COLLABORATION	BEST MANAGEMENT PLANNING	RESEARCH & INFORMATION NEEDS	
APPROACH	Deliver EFB information to improve our understanding of EFB distribution in the Great Lakes region	Educate stakeholders about EFB to reduce spread and increase EFB management capacity	Identify and prioritize critical information needs to support EFB management and research	Facilitate researcher and manager collaboration
OBJECTIVE	Maintain a detection survey protocol and certification data management system	Identify and prioritize critical information needs to support EFB management and research	Facilitate researcher and manager collaboration	
INITIATIVE TO BE ACCOMPLISHED BY COLLABORATIVE	Identify and prioritize critical information needs to support EFB management and research	Identify and prioritize critical information needs to support EFB management and research	Facilitate researcher and manager collaboration	
GOING FORWARD	Identify and prioritize critical information needs to support EFB management and research	Identify and prioritize critical information needs to support EFB management and research	Facilitate researcher and manager collaboration	
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Top: GLC staff members Nichole Angell, Taaja Tucker-Silva, Theresa Gruninger and Samantha Tank pose with "Phraggy," the Great Lakes *Phragmites* Collaborative's cartoon mascot.

Bottom: The GLC's European Frog-bit Collaborative released a new regional strategy for 2024-2026, presenting the collaborative's mission, focus areas, approaches and objectives. Visit the collaborative at efbcollaborative.net.



In 2024, the GLC coordinated the sixth annual Great Lakes AIS Landing Blitz, sharing information on how to prevent the spread of AIS.



Top: GLC Board of Directors Chair Mary Mertz, Vice Chair Tim Bruno, Executive Director Erika Jensen, and Immediate Past Chair Todd Ambros on Capitol Hill for the 2024 Great Lakes Congressional Breakfast as part of the annual Great Lakes Day in Washington, D.C.

Middle: Student conservation volunteers Nandika Rajaram and Matias Romano with the Friends of Recreation, Conservation and Environmental Stewardship (FORCES), pose for a picture with Amy Kochem, Tom Hughes, and Ron Rausch from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and GLC Executive Director Erika Jensen at the 2024 GLC Annual Meeting in Rochester, New York.

Bottom: Speakers and attendees at the 2024 GLC Annual Meeting.

AIS, which are recognized as one of the most significant threats to the ecological and economic health of the Great Lakes. During the 2024 Landing Blitz, 152,000 people were educated about AIS by more than 870 agency staff, watercraft inspectors and volunteers who helped with the event. Over 920 public and private boat landings in eight Great Lakes states and provinces participated in the event, and many of the participating boat landings also hosted inspections, resulting in over 102,000 boat inspections. More than 840,000 people saw information about the Landing Blitz online.

Policy and Advocacy

In March 2024, the GLC once again led a binational coalition of regional agencies, Indigenous organizations, legislators, local communities, and business, maritime and environmental groups in releasing shared priorities for restoring the Great Lakes and supporting the region's economy. The priorities were released in advance of Great Lakes Day, an annual event that brings together regional leaders and members of Congress who play a critical role in shaping Great Lakes policies. In 2024, more than a dozen members of Congress spoke in support of the lakes at the Congressional Breakfast.

New in 2024, the GLC also introduced the Great Lakes Investment Tracker, an interactive map that showcases federally funded

projects in Great Lakes states. The app maps and categorizes projects funded through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and other federal programs. Users can see what projects have benefited a specific area, sort by features including funding amount and lead agency, export project data, and download a summary report for any state, county, or congressional district. Visit it at investments.glc.org.

The GLC hosted its 2024 Semiannual Meeting in D.C. in advance of Great Lakes Day. Leaders from the U.S. and Canadian governments spoke at the meeting, and panels were convened on federal investments in clean maritime initiatives; coordination and authorities for invasive species prevention and control; and harmful algal bloom research and control.

The 2024 Great Lakes Commission Annual Meeting was held in October on the shores of Lake Ontario in Rochester, New York. At the meeting, commissioners heard from U.S. EPA Regions 2 and 5, as well as federal and local elected officials, and passed resolutions calling for reauthorization of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) as well as stronger protections against the introduction of invasive species. Since the meeting, staff and commissioners have worked to support reauthorization of the GLRI, communicating with members of Congress and the Administration on the value of this critical program to the Great Lakes and the nation. ■



Financials

Overall, the GLC continues to effectively manage its general, restricted and cash reserve funds to achieve the agency's goals and objectives. These figures were confirmed by an independent audit, which is conducted each year to examine the GLC's financial operations.

Fiscal Year 2024

The Great Lakes Commission concluded FY2024 in sound financial condition, with total revenues of \$11.349 million. Total revenues exceeded expenses by 1.36%. The 2024 fiscal year ended June 30, 2024.

Revenues

Grants and contracts	\$ 10,471,014	92.26%
State contributions	736,000	6.49%
Meetings, other	62,089	0.55%
Interest income	14,443	0.13%
Change in fair value of investments	65,587	0.58%

TOTAL	\$ 11,349,133	
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Expenses

Grants and contracts	\$ 8,279,541	73.96%
Personnel	2,248,963	20.09%
Office operations	424,218	3.79%
Program activities	112,302	1.00%
Travel	100,600	0.90%
Communication	29,011	0.26%

TOTAL	\$ 11,194,635	
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Change in net position	\$ 154,498	1.36%
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Oak Street Beach on Lake Michigan
in Chicago, Illinois.

Commissioners and Alternates

Illinois

Loren Wobig, Illinois
Dept. of Natural Resources
Stephanie Comer, Comer Family Foundation
Yu-Feng Forrest Lin, Illinois Water
Resources Center, University of Illinois
at Urbana-Champaign
Josina Morita, Cook County Commissioner

Indiana

Sharon Jackson, Office of the
Governor of Indiana
Steven A. Fisher, American Great Lakes
Ports Association
Kay L. Nelson, Northwest Indiana Forum
Brian Rockensuess, Indiana Dept.
of Environmental Management
Chris Smith, Indiana Dept.
of Natural Resources

As of December 2024.
Delegation chairs are in bold.

Indiana Alternates

Ryan Mueller, Indiana Dept.
of Natural Resources
Jody W. Peacock, Ports of Indiana

Michigan

James Clift, Michigan Dept. of
Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy
Christopher B. McClain,
The McClain Corporation
Hon. Candice Miller, Macomb County
Public Works
Hon. Dana Nessel, Michigan
Attorney General
Marc E. Smith, National Wildlife Federation

Michigan Alternates

Kara Cook, Michigan Dept. of Environment,
Great Lakes, and Energy
S. Peter Manning, Michigan Dept. of the
Attorney General
Polly Synk, Michigan Dept. of the
Attorney General
Jennifer McKay

Minnesota

Katrina Kessler, Minnesota
Pollution Control Agency
Hon. Karin Housley, State Senator
Hon. Alicia Kozlowski,
State Representative
Hon. Ann Rest, State Senator
Hon. Paul Torkelson,
State Representative

Minnesota Alternates

Deb DeLuca, Duluth Seaway
Port Authority
Peter Tester, Minnesota Pollution
Control Agency

New York

Sean Mahar, New York State Dept.
of Environmental Conservation
Kisha Santiago-Martinez, New York
State Dept. of State

New York Alternates

Katie Petronis, New York State Dept.
of Environmental Conservation

Aerial view of the Tawas Point
lighthouse on Lake Huron in Tawas
Point State Park, East Tawas, Michigan.



Ohio

Mary Mertz, Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources

Hon. Jamie Callender, State Representative

Hon. Theresa Gavarone, State Senator

Anne M. Vogel, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency

James H. I. Weakley, Lake Carriers' Association

Ohio Alternates

John D. Baker, International Longshoremen's Association

Mindy Bankey, Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources

Tiffani Kavalec, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency

Debra DiCianna, Lake Carriers' Association

Ontario

Earl Provost, Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade

Craig Brown, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry

Christina Critelli, Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs, Cabinet Office

Felix Fung, Ministry of Transportation

Chloe Stuart, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

Ontario Alternates

Jennifer Keyes, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry

Leo Luong, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

Cale Selby, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Gurpreet Sidhu, Ministry of Transportation

Pennsylvania

Timothy J. Bruno, Pennsylvania Dept. of Environmental Protection

Hon. Patrick J. Harkins, State Representative

Joseph Sinnott, Erie County Dept. of Economic Development

Pennsylvania Alternates

Bevin Buchheister, Pennsylvania Dept. of Environmental Protection

Québec Alternates

Kerith Brand, Québec Government Office in Chicago

Geneviève Désy, Ministère des Transports

Edo Jakupovic, Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques

Frederic Lecomte, Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs

Nicole Trépanier, Fednav Limited

Wisconsin

Wade Strickland, Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources

Todd L. Ambs, Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources (retired)

Wisconsin Alternates

Dean Haen, Port of Green Bay

GLC Staff

Left to right, back row: Amanda Grimm, Connor Roessler, Eric Brown, Nicole Zacharda, Tom Crane, Don Leflouria Jr., Joe Bertram, Jill Estrada, Laura Andrews. **Front row:** James Polidori, Kate Truitt, Samantha Tank, Taaja Tucker-Silva, Erika Jensen, Theresa Gruninger, NiQuita Larkin, Hannah Reynolds. Not pictured: Nichole Angell, Nate Kroeze, Jack Guirey, Autumn McGowan, Samantha Miller, Mary Sabuda, Beth Wanamaker. Staff as of December 2024.

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Québec

Jean-François Hould, Québec Government Office in Chicago

Grégory Cloutier, Ministère des Transports

Pierre-Luc Gravel, Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques

Jacob Martin-Malus, Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques

Guillaume Dubreuil, Groupe CSL



About the Great Lakes Commission

The Great Lakes Commission is a binational government agency established in 1955 to protect the Great Lakes and the economies and ecosystems they support.

Its membership includes leaders from the eight U.S. states and two Canadian provinces in the Great Lakes basin. The GLC recommends policies and practices to balance the use, development, and conservation of the water resources of the Great Lakes and brings the region together to work on issues that no single community, state, province, or nation can tackle alone.