



Investing in a National Asset

A Leadership Agenda for Great Lakes Restoration and Economic Revitalization

Protecting an Economic Powerhouse

The Great Lakes are the economic, ecological and cultural backbone of our eight-state, two-province region. With nearly one-third of U.S. and Canadian economic activity centered around the Great Lakes and 95 percent of our nation's fresh surface water, the Great Lakes are a natural treasure and a vital economic asset. Restoring, protecting and wisely managing them is an enduring, bipartisan priority for our nation and for the people of the Great Lakes region and their elected leaders.

A Leadership Agenda for the Great Lakes

The Great Lakes Commission is leading the states and provinces—Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Ontario, Pennsylvania, Québec and Wisconsin—in speaking with a unified voice and collectively fulfilling their vision for a healthy, vibrant Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River region. Established by the Great Lakes Basin Compact of 1955 and authorized by Congress in 1968, the Commission's priorities are directed at promoting, planning for and investing in the sustainable use, development and conservation of the water resources of the Great Lakes Basin.

Great Lakes Commission 2019 Federal Priorities

- **Fully fund the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative** to help communities clean up degraded areas and create new economic opportunities along their waterfronts.
- **Modernize water infrastructure and safeguard drinking water** to protect public health, support business and industry, and help revitalize communities.
- **Strengthen the Great Lakes navigation system** to support the national economy, create jobs, and reduce traffic congestion.
- **Protect against invasive species** like Asian carp, zebra mussels and sea lamprey.
- **Promote agricultural conservation** to protect water quality and prevent harmful algal blooms.
- **Coordinate federal programs** to manage information and ensure regional accountability.

Following the interstate and federal agreements under the Great Lakes Basin Compact, the Great Lakes Commission calls on Congress and the administration to protect and leverage the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River as vital economic and environmental assets. The priorities on the following pages outline specific investments that will strengthen our nation, create jobs, protect public health and revitalize communities.

\$6 trillion
binational **regional economy**

51 million
U.S. and Canadian **jobs**

\$278 billion in bilateral U.S.-Canadian **trade annually** in the Great Lakes region

\$35 billion binational economic impact from **commercial navigation**

Drinking water for **48 million** U.S. and Canadian citizens

\$42 billion from **fishing and hunting** in the Great Lakes states

\$34 billion from **recreational boating** in the Great Lakes states



■ **Modernize Water Infrastructure and Safeguard Drinking Water**

Invest in water infrastructure to safeguard drinking water, rebuild failing wastewater systems, support business and industry, and help revitalize communities.

The Great Lakes Commission calls for renewed investment in water infrastructure to protect our drinking water and the health of our lakes and rivers. Nearly \$10 billion is needed *annually* over the next two decades to maintain and upgrade drinking water, stormwater and wastewater infrastructure in the eight Great Lakes states. Congress passed *America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018* with provisions that will support states and local communities in repairing, maintaining and upgrading wastewater, drinking water and stormwater infrastructure. The Great Lakes Commission urges Congress and the administration to advance these and other reforms to increase private sector investment in water infrastructure and new clean water technologies, protect source water, ensure water affordability, and promote green infrastructure and integrated water infrastructure management. Urgent action is needed to address emerging threats to drinking water from PFAS/PFOA and other toxic pollutants, including improved monitoring and detection, and coordination between state and federal agencies to clean up PFAS pollution from former military bases and other sources.



■ **Strengthen Commercial Navigation**

Strengthen the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River navigation system by maintaining and upgrading locks, ports and related infrastructure and ensuring dredging to keep waterways open to commerce.

The Great Lakes Commission calls for continued federal investment to maintain and advance the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River maritime transportation system, which links more than 100 U.S. and Canadian ports to the global economy, provides an environmentally responsible transportation alternative, moves an average of 175 million tons of cargo annually, and generates more than 237,000 jobs and \$35 billion in economic impact. The system is vital for our national economy and security, with nearly 100 percent of the iron ore needed for U.S. raw steel production passing through the Soo Locks. Key actions include full use of monies paid into the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund and dedicated funding for the Great Lakes; dredging to maintain channels and harbors; new solutions for managing dredged material to reduce its disposal in the open waters of the Great Lakes; direction from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to manage the Great Lakes as a single, integrated navigation system; and consistent funding for the newly authorized Soo Lock to ensure its efficient and timely construction. The Commission also supports increased resources for Customs and Border Patrol to facilitate cross-border movement of cargo and passengers, including a growing cruise tourism economy.



■ **Sustain Restoration**

Fully fund the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to maintain progress in cleaning up and restoring North America's greatest freshwater resource.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) is a highly successful program that enjoys strong, bipartisan support from Congress and regional leaders. While we have made important progress under the GLRI, substantial work remains. Work is still underway in 19 Great Lakes Areas of Concern (our region's most heavily degraded areas) and vital cleanup actions depend on GLRI funding. For example, in 2020 U.S. EPA will be ready to begin ten contaminated sediment cleanups in five states that will require an estimated \$88 million in federal funding and will leverage nearly \$60 million from nonfederal partners. The GLRI is also helping to prevent beach closures and protect drinking water for 48 million people by working with farmers and communities to prevent polluted runoff that causes harmful algae blooms. The GLRI is also sustaining our most effective line of defense against Asian carp, removing nearly eight million pounds of Asian carp from the Illinois River – an important pathway to Lake Michigan. Finally, the GLRI is creating jobs and stimulating economic development in waterfront communities. A recent study showed that the GLRI will have a long-term impact on our regional economy, with every dollar spent on cleanup work between 2010 and 2016 generating more than three dollars in additional economic activity through 2036. The Great Lakes Commission urges Congress to provide \$300 million for the GLRI in FY 2020 to sustain this progress.

Protect Against Invasive Species

Safeguard the Great Lakes from aquatic invasive species.

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are a chronic threat to the environmental and economic health of the Great Lakes. Strong federal leadership and coordination with states is vital to prevent the introduction and spread of AIS. The president and Congress should provide funding for successful programs, including the national AIS task force, regional AIS panels and state AIS management plans established under the National Invasive Species Act, and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's sea lamprey control program. Federal agencies should use existing authorities like the Lacey Act to identify and restrict imports of harmful non-native species. Efforts to combat the destructive spread of Asian carp across the United States and prevent their establishment in the Great Lakes region must include federal funding for the Asian Carp Action Plan and the National Asian Carp Management and Control Plan. The Army Corps of Engineers should continue to work with the state of Illinois as the nonfederal sponsor and with other states and provinces to finalize and fund an acceptable plan for preventing Asian carp from moving through the Brandon Road Lock and Dam, while mitigating negative impacts. The Army Corps of Engineers should complete the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study to prevent AIS transfer between the Mississippi River and Great Lakes watersheds. Finally, U.S. EPA, in close consultation with Great Lakes states and the Great Lakes Commission, should implement the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (VIDA) to set a single, national standard for ballast water and other discharges from commercial vessels. Congress should support the Commission in convening the states and other key participants, as authorized in VIDA, to assess and recommend consensus-based actions to protect the unique freshwater resources of the Great Lakes from the introduction and spread of invasive species, while maintaining a globally competitive maritime economy. U.S. EPA should also work closely with the Commission under VIDA to establish an effective Great Lakes Invasive Species Program.

Promote Conservation Actions

Strengthen agricultural conservation programs to protect water quality, enhance wildlife habitat and bolster the farm economy.

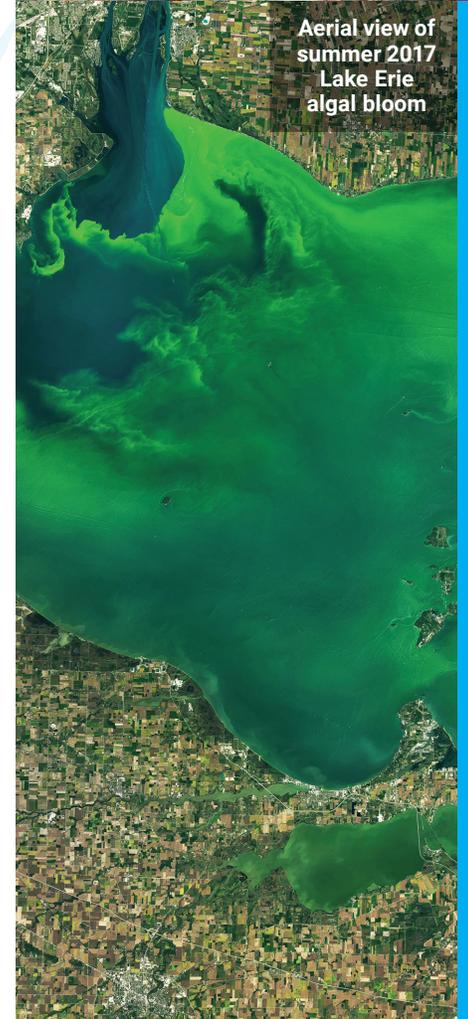
Federal investments in agricultural conservation practices are critical to protect water quality and enhance habitat for wildlife. Harmful algal blooms are a persistent threat to public health, drinking water safety and local economies, particularly in vulnerable areas like Western Lake Erie, Saginaw Bay and Green Bay. For example, Lake Erie has experienced severe algal blooms in nine of the last ten years. Runoff of nutrients and soil erosion contribute to these blooms while clogging our rivers and ports and diminishing agricultural productivity. Farm Bill conservation programs help solve these problems by enabling agricultural producers to conserve soil resources, improve water quality, and do their part to restore the Great Lakes. The 2018 Farm Bill reforms will improve effectiveness and maintain funding for vital conservation programs, including the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, which targets the Great Lakes as a "critical conservation area." The Great Lakes Commission calls on Congress and the administration to implement these reforms and strategically target conservation programs that protect the Great Lakes and support a healthy farm economy.

PHOTOS Cover: Lake Michigan views from Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore in Porter, Indiana, ©flickr/Tom Gill. **Previous page, top to bottom:** kitchen faucet, ©Shutterstock; the Blue Water Bridge over the St. Clair River connecting Port Huron, Michigan, and Sarnia, Ontario ©flickr/U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Detroit District - Richard MacDonald; Warren Dunes State Park on Lake Michigan in Sawyer, Michigan, ©Shutterstock.

This page, top to bottom: bighead carp (a variety of Asian carp) ©U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ryan Hagerty; aerial view of harmful algal blooms in western Lake Erie on September 26, 2017, ©NASA Earth Observatory, Joshua Stevens, using Landsat data from the U.S. Geological Survey.



Invasive
carp



Aerial view of
summer 2017
Lake Erie
algal bloom



Voices from the Great Lakes

To Anishinabe people, the Great Lakes represent a spiritual base, life, freshwater, and home. As much as the Great Lakes were viewed by our ancestors as a destination for their migration journey, the waters now represent a critical piece of survival infrastructure as climate change alters the planet. These Lakes were left here by the Creator to take care of our people and all life.

Hon. Mike Wiggins Jr., Tribal Chairman, Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

The Great Lakes serve as both important economic drivers and phenomenal contributors to quality of life. With more than 66,000 Hoosiers employed in industries operating on or supporting the Great Lakes, the water connects our workforce and our state to the world. Indiana is committed to working with our state, federal and provincial partners to protect this vital natural asset.

Hon. Eric J. Holcomb, Governor, State of Indiana

Clean water is essential to support a healthy population, a thriving economy, and a well-functioning ecosystem. As the primary source of fresh water for our region's communities, we have a shared interest in the Great Lakes. Policies to restore and protect the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River are important to make sure residents, businesses, and industries in Ohio and throughout the region will continue to have a plentiful source of clean, affordable water both now and in the future.

**Hon. Michael Sheehy, Ohio House of Representatives
and Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Legislative Caucus Executive Committee**

The Government of Canada values its long-standing partnership with the Great Lakes Commission and our mutual commitment to support healthy lakes and waterways, a vibrant economy, and a robust infrastructure that unites families and businesses across our borders. Through strong leadership provided by the Commission and its 2019 federal priorities, stakeholders throughout the Great Lakes can be confident in the region's continued sustainable growth and prosperity.

Hon. Joe Comartin, Consul General of Canada in Detroit

Lake Erie and Presque Isle Bay are the City of Erie's premier natural resources. Presque Isle State Park greets over four million visitors annually, spurring a vibrant tourism economy. Our spectacular Bayfront development adjacent to Erie's downtown as well as the wealth of fishing, boating, and water sporting opportunities make Erie a wonderful place to live, work, play, and visit. We are committed to keeping our waterways clean and our maritime commerce strong to ensure this resource will be shared by all for generations to come.

Hon. Joseph V. Schember, Mayor, City of Erie, Pennsylvania

The binational Great Lakes navigational system is a key economic driver for port communities and the North America Heartland. In order to realize the full potential of ports, their linked multi-modal transport networks, and the industrial base that they serve, we must maintain and strengthen the system by ensuring a consistent flow of federal funding for navigational dredging, plus upgrading and modernizing port facilities, locks (priority being the Soo Locks) and related infrastructure.

Deborah DeLuca, Executive Director, Duluth Seaway Port Authority

About the Great Lakes Commission The Great Lakes Commission is a public agency established by the Great Lakes states in 1955 to coordinate management, stewardship and development of the water resources of the Great Lakes Basin and to represent the states' interests on Great Lakes issues. The Commission promotes the concept that a healthy environment and prosperous economy are mutually dependent. With appointees from eight states and two Canadian provinces, the Commission serves as a shared forum for the development of regional policy and as an advocate for legislation and programs to benefit the Great Lakes Basin. The Canadian provinces of Ontario and Québec participate in all Commission deliberations and activities.



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