

Building a Better Basin

Revitalizing and Protecting the Great Lakes Environment and Economy

Great Lakes Commission 2021 Federal Priorities

The eight-state, binational Great Lakes basin is an economic engine for North America, contains more than 90% of our nation's freshwater and supports vital industries such as automotive production, power generation, agriculture, maritime transportation, tourism, and recreation.

Recovering from the COVID-19 crisis provides an opportunity to renew our collective commitment to the complementary goals of environmental protection and economic activity. With nearly one-third of U.S. and Canadian economies centered around the Great Lakes basin, revitalizing and protecting the Great Lakes economy will accelerate and stabilize our national recovery.

The Great Lakes Commission urges Congress and the Biden administration to:

- Invest in infrastructure to ensure access to clean and safe water
- Build a resilient Great Lakes basin
- Fully fund the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative
- Strengthen the Great Lakes Navigation System
- Protect against invasive species
- Promote agricultural and other conservation initiatives
- Support efforts to inform basinwide decision-making

Confronting Complex Challenges for the Great Lakes Region

Environmental & Public Health

Economic Development

Climate Resilience

Harmful Algal Blooms

Drinking Water Security

Aquatic Invasive Species

These priorities reflect well-established needs and opportunities for strengthening the economic and environmental health of the Great Lakes basin. They enjoy broad support among state and local leaders, business and industry, and the environmental community. Investing in these priorities will swiftly generate new jobs and economic activity across multiple sectors in the Great Lakes basin.

Invest in water infrastructure to protect drinking water, rebuild failing wastewater systems, and support community health and redevelopment

- Increase funding for the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Programs.
- Support the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Program and reforms to increase private sector investment in water infrastructure and new clean water technologies.
- Fund programs that support states and local communities in repairing, maintaining, and upgrading wastewater, drinking water and stormwater infrastructure.
- Implement U.S. EPA's PFAS Action Plan, establish a federal drinking water standard for PFAS, and support efforts to improve monitoring, detection, and coordination between state and federal agencies to clean up PFAS pollution from former military bases and other sources.

Support federal, tribal, First Nation, state, and local actions to ensure the economy and environment of the Great Lakes region are resilient to the adverse impacts of a changing climate

- Fund the Army Corps' Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study to develop a collaborative, risk-based decision framework that identifies opportunities to improve coastal resilience in the region over a range of future conditions.
- Fund programs that support states and localities' efforts to address erosion, flooding and other consequences as a result of persistent high water in the basin.
- Provide support for the Great Lakes Commission to convene and coordinate U.S. and Canadian stakeholders to develop and implement an action plan for economic and ecological resilience in the Great Lakes basin.



Lake Michigan coastal erosion,
Racine, Wisconsin



Strengthen the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River navigation system to keep waterways open to commerce

- Provide funding to ensure continued, efficient construction of a new Soo Lock.
- Fully appropriate funds from the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, including dedicated funding for the Great Lakes Navigation System, to support dredging and maintenance of Great Lakes harbors, channels, and navigation infrastructure. Encourage use of those funds for the placement of dredge material to meet state water quality and environmental requirements.
- Fully fund the Maritime Administration's Port Infrastructure Development Program to provide grants to modernize and enhance Great Lakes port facilities.
- Provide funding for construction of a new heavy icebreaker for the Great Lakes and maintenance of existing icebreaking vessels to ensure the Coast Guard is able to remove ice jams and maintain federal navigation channels in the Great Lakes.
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection should facilitate cross-border movement of cargo and passengers on the Northern Border.

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

- Appropriate no less than \$375 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, as authorized by the Great Lakes Initiative Act of 2019, to continue environmental cleanups, reduce nutrient pollution that causes toxic algal blooms, and protect the Great Lakes from invasive carp and other aquatic invasive species.
- Provide greater flexibility and adaptability in implementing the GLRI to be more responsive to emerging priorities, such as HABs.

Invest in approaches that will stop the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species

- Appropriate funds for a Brandon Road Project to help prevent the movement of Asian carp and other aquatic invasive species (AIS) from the Mississippi River basin into the Great Lakes.
- Provide continued funding for the preconstruction engineering and design of the Brandon Road Project and work with Illinois and the other states and provinces to prepare for its implementation.
- 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.
- Provide funding for successful programs including the regional AIS panels and state AIS management plans established under the National Invasive Species Act; the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's sea lamprey control program; and the Asian Carp Action Plan.
- U.S. EPA and U.S. Coast Guard should work with their Canadian partners to establish binationally compatible regulations and consult with the Great Lakes states to advance ballast water policies and standards that protect the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence basin from further introduction and spread of AIS while minimizing financial impacts to vessel operators.
- U.S. EPA should, in consultation with the Great Lakes states, the Great Lakes Commission, and the Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species, establish the Great Lakes and Lake Champlain Invasive Species Program authorized in VIDA. Congress should appropriate funds to execute this program.
- U.S. EPA should continue to invest in successful invasive species collaboratives through the GLRI.



Strengthen agricultural and other conservation programs to protect water quality, reduce nutrient pollution, enhance wildlife habitat and bolster the economy

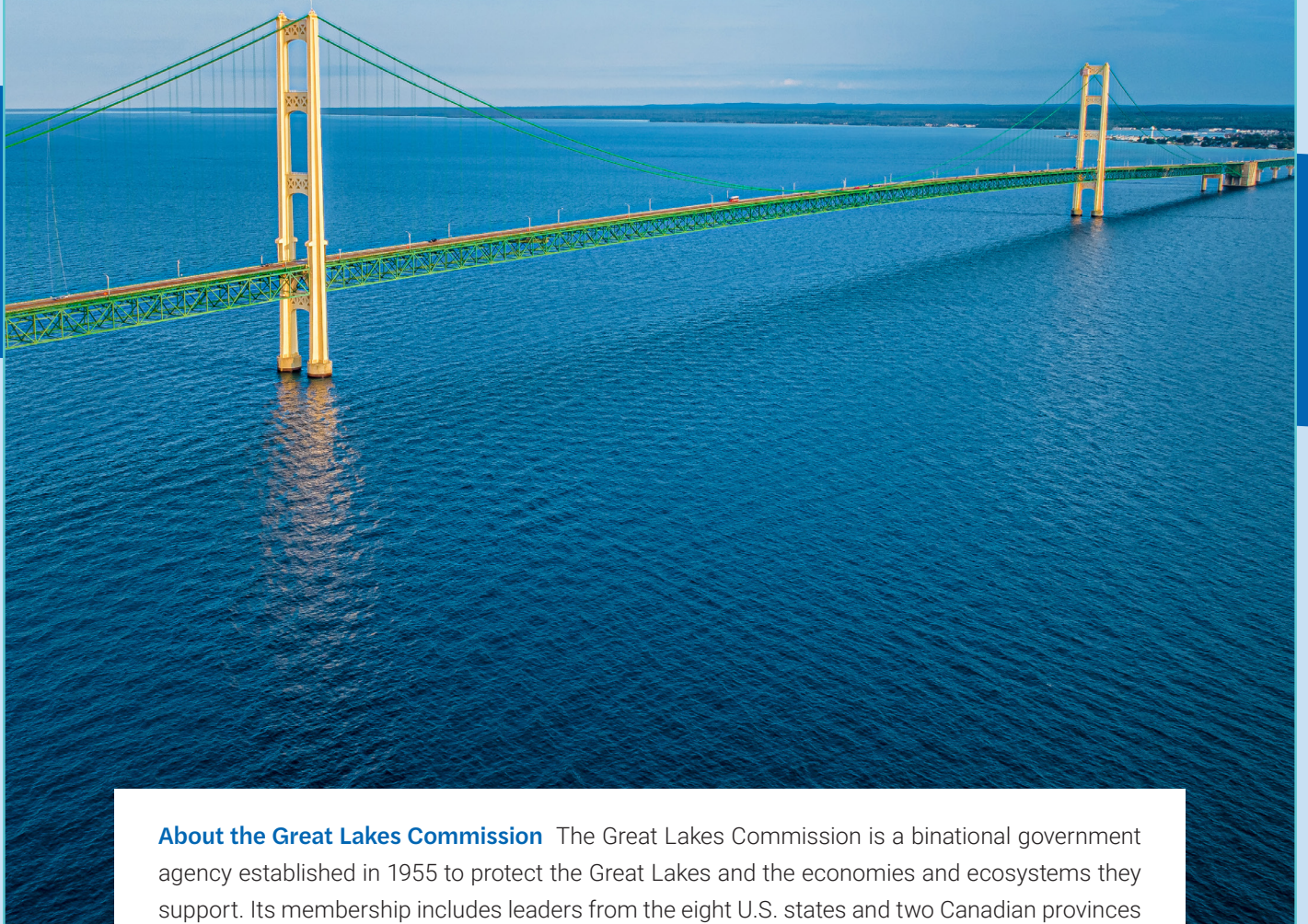
- Provide full funding for Farm Bill agricultural conservation programs, including the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, which targets the Great Lakes as a "critical conservation area."
- Implement reforms from the 2018 Farm Bill to strategically target conservation programs that protect the Great Lakes from harmful algal blooms and safeguard drinking water.
- Support use of GLRI and other federal funding to explore and support new approaches to reduce nutrient pollution, including natural infrastructure.

Invest in binational efforts to track progress toward regional goals

- Continue funding for successful collaborative efforts that facilitate information-sharing and coordinate regional activities, such as the Great Lakes Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Collaborative, the Invasive Mussel Collaborative, the Great Lakes Phragmites Collaborative, and the Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species.
- Invest in the Great Lakes Commission's Blue Accounting initiative to track the region's progress toward shared goals for the Great Lakes.

PHOTOS Cover: Split Rock Lighthouse on Lake Superior, Two Harbors, Minnesota ©Gian Lorenzo Ferretti Photography. Page 2: Soo Locks ©Doug Herndon; Racine, Wisconsin, coastal erosion ©Alert Five Productions. This page: Lake Erie algae ©flickr/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory; Evanston, Illinois, beach ©istockphoto. Back page: Mackinac Bridge ©Aaron Yoder.

Mackinac Bridge



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.



1300 Victors Way, Suite 1350, Ann Arbor, MI 48108-5203
Contacts: Erika Jensen, ejensen@glc.org; Eric Brown, ebrown@glc.org
734-971-9135 www.glc.org **FEBRUARY 2021**
facebook.com/greatlakescommission [@GLCommission](https://twitter.com/GLCommission)