



2025 Federal Priorities

Value of the Great Lakes

Drinking water for
47.5 million people in the
U.S. and Canada

Maritime system contributing
\$50.9 billion to the U.S.
and Canadian economies

95% of America's
fresh surface water

Agricultural economy
valued at more than
\$24 billion in the U.S.

\$81 billion recreational
economy from fishing, hunting,
boating and wildlife-watching

Every **\$1** spent on Great Lakes
restoration generates more
than **\$3** in economic activity

Fully fund the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

Fund the Great Lakes Commission
to fulfill its unique role in the region

Provide the cleanest and
safest drinking water in the world

Unlock the economic potential of the
Great Lakes Navigation System

Eliminate harmful algal blooms

Defend against invasive species

Build a resilient Great Lakes basin



Lake Michigan Cut River Bridge, Naubinway, Michigan

Crosscutting Great Lakes Programs

- Appropriate no less than \$475 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) in FY 2026, as authorized by the *Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2019*.
- Reauthorize the GLRI for an additional five years at \$500 million per year.
- Ensure full funding and maximize utilization of regional collaborative efforts under the GLRI, including the Great Lakes Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Collaborative, Invasive Mussel Collaborative, Great Lakes *Phragmites* Collaborative, and European Frog-bit Collaborative.
- Appropriate \$5 million to the GLC in FY 2026 so it has adequate resources and capacity to: ensure states and the federal government are coordinated and communicating on the implementation of important federal and regional programs; track the region's progress toward shared goals for the Great Lakes; and proactively identify and advance priorities for congressional and federal agency action.
- Fund cross-cutting planning efforts to coordinate and develop regional science and data collection in the Great Lakes, including the International Joint Commission decadal science plan and the U.S. Geological Survey science plan.
- Ensure funding is adequately allocated to federal agencies to support Great Lakes science and data gathering, regional observing systems and recapitalization of science vessels, including funding for the acquisition of a new Great Lakes Science Research Vessel capable of operating in winter conditions to support modernization of the retrofitted and aging fleet.

Resilient Great Lakes Basin

- Ensure funding for federal forecasting and modeling for lake level variability, extreme storm events, precipitation, and flooding impacts on the Great Lakes basin.
- Ensure federal grants for coastal resilience projects provide dedicated funding to the Great Lakes region. These grants should support technical assistance, coastal resilience planning, and mitigation in both high- and low-water conditions, and nonfederal cost-sharing requirements should be minimized to assist smaller and disadvantaged communities.
- Mitigate the effects of extreme storm events through nature-based solutions, including advanced technologies, in upstream areas that store water.
- Fully fund the Federal Priority Streamgauge (FPS) program, which collects and provides crucial data to understand, plan for, and build collective capacity to improve the nation's resilience to extreme weather events.
- Federal agencies should work with the GLC to build a coordinated scientific, technical, and economic understanding of agricultural production and changing weather patterns that can inform future water demand forecasting in the Great Lakes basin.

Lake Huron Port Huron, Michigan





Lake Erie Great Lakes freighter at the Port of Cleveland, Ohio

Clean and Safe Water

- Reauthorize the Harmful Algal Bloom Hypoxia Research and Control Amendments Act (HABHRCA) to comprehensively address Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs).
 - Increase funding for development of mitigation and treatment technologies to address HABs in freshwater systems.
 - Fund federal research to increase understanding of the human health effects of HABs.
- Appoint a Great Lakes HABs Coordinator.
- Enact a five-year Farm Bill in 2025 that funds conservation programs that reduce the nutrient pollution leading to HABs.
 - Increase funding for programs and projects that restore natural systems, which slow the flow of nutrient-laden water.
 - Instruct federal agencies to coordinate and collaborate with states that are working on constructed or restored wetland systems.
 - Direct USDA and NRCS to coordinate with states to ensure conservation and nutrient reduction practices are implemented in areas that will have the greatest impact.
- Prioritize projects that would improve water quality in historically underrepresented rural and urban areas for funding by the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds.
- Prohibit usage of Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds for congressionally directed spending (CDS). States should be allowed to utilize SRF funding according to intended use plans. The GLC acknowledges the value of CDS for priority water projects and believes CDS for water projects should be funded through a separate appropriation.
- Provide funding to the states to address PFAS and improve coordination between state and federal agencies to clean up PFAS pollution.
- Fund specific research to better understand and target reductions and remediation of the highest risk sources and forms of mercury contamination, and how climate stressors may impact mercury pollution and exposure in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River region.

Safe and Reliable Waterways

- Appropriate \$500 million for the Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP). Support increased federal cost share for ports, and work to streamline the funding process to decrease barriers to participation. **The Great Lakes region should receive an equitable share of grant funds.**
- Fully and efficiently fund construction of the new lock at the Soo and continue to fund the Soo Locks Asset Renewal, both of which are necessary to reduce the risk of a supply chain failure.
- Appropriate \$55 million for construction of a new heavy icebreaker for the Great Lakes and maintenance of existing icebreaking vessels.
- Provide an exemption to the Harbor Maintenance Tax (HMT) for non-bulk cargo transported between U.S. ports and between Canada and the U.S. in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River navigation system to enable short sea shipping on the Great Lakes.
- Continue allocating funding to eliminate the dredging backlog for deep draft commercial harbors and appropriate an additional \$8 million to address the shallow draft and recreational harbor dredging backlog in the Great Lakes.
- Provide funding through the Great Lakes and Lake Champlain Invasive Species Program to assist in development of measures and treatment technologies that can be implemented by the Great Lakes fleet to minimize the risk of aquatic invasive species (AIS) spread.
- Appropriate funds and provide direction to U.S. Customs and Border Protection to dedicate adequate resources to facilitate movement of cargo and passengers on the U.S./Canada border, including timely clearance of containerized cargo in Great Lakes ports.

Healthy Aquatic Ecosystems

- Authorize the Brandon Road Interbasin Project at full federal expense, including construction, OMRR&R, and nonstructural measures.
- Fund essential AIS programs including regional panels and state management plans established under the National Invasive Species Act, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's sea lamprey control program, the Invasive Carp Action Plan, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) AIS early detection and rapid response programs.
- Pass legislation authorizing the USFWS and U.S. Department of Agriculture to conduct mandatory pre-import screening and quarantine measures for nonnative species, and prohibit the interstate transport of listed species.
- Ban Great Lakes "least wanted" species through existing federal agencies authorities.





Enhancing Great Lakes Regional Coordination and Collaboration

In fiscal year 2023, the **Great Lakes Commission** received funding from Congress to enhance its important work of coordinating action among all levels of government on efforts to protect and sustain Great Lakes water resources.

Completed Actions

- Built the Great Lakes Investment Tracker to better understand the scope and impact of federal initiatives in the region and inform future investment decisions
- Held a first-of-its-kind HABs science and policy workshop to harmonize prevention and response strategies throughout the Great Lakes
- Launched a microgrant program to help Great Lakes communities build capacity and utilize modern tools to keep nutrients out of the lakes
- Supported initiatives to enhance supply chain efficiency and sustainability in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River maritime transportation system
- Released a more user-friendly and secure Great Lakes Regional Water Use Database to provide information on uses of Great Lakes water
- Executed a first-ever memorandum of understanding between the GLC, International Joint Commission-Great Lakes Regional Office, and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to better coordinate shared management responsibilities and seek organizational efficiencies

Upcoming Activities

- Conduct an economic valuation of resilience investments
- Establish a decision-making framework for coastal ecosystem management
- Compile and disseminate Great Lakes maritime data and convene stakeholders on emerging opportunities within the maritime transportation system
- Support finalization of a forward-looking Great Lakes Science Plan to coordinate future efforts
- Enhance HABs data collection, integration, and reporting that will lead to better understanding of HAB dynamics and prevention
- Work with leaders in the water infrastructure sector and soil and water conservation districts to identify opportunities for developing the region's workforce

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.