



Great Lakes Investments at work in Ohio



The state of Ohio – together with local communities, nongovernmental organizations, and industry – is collaborating with the federal government to implement a comprehensive restoration strategy for the Great Lakes. This partnership is generating on-the-ground actions that will improve Ohio’s economy, environment, and quality of life. These activities will benefit us today as well as the next generation of Ohio residents who look to the Great Lakes as an important resource to support their social and economic well-being.

The Great Lakes: A Vital Economic Asset for Ohio

Cleaning up and maintaining the Great Lakes is vital to ensuring the continued growth of the region. Lake Erie is one of Ohio’s most valuable natural resources and an essential element in Ohio’s economic development strategy. The lake serves as a drinking water source for three million Ohio residents and provides water for fishing, manufacturing, shipping goods and commodities, and waterborne transportation and recreation. [Lake Erie is the economic engine of the region, contributing to:](#)

- Exceptional [hunting and fishing opportunities](#) that annually attract **2.2 million** anglers and hunters who spend **\$7.4 billion** and support over **45,000 jobs**;
- A [tourism and recreation industry](#) that supports more than **127,000 Ohio jobs** and generates over **\$20 billion** in economic activity;
- A [marine economy](#) that supports more than **56,000 jobs** directly linked to Lake Erie and contributes **\$3.6 billion** to Ohio’s GDP;
- A [recreational boating industry](#) that supports almost **20,000 jobs** with an annual economic impact of **\$5.4 billion** statewide;
- [Maritime shipping operations](#) that handle more than **35 million tons of cargo** annually, generating more than **31,000 jobs** and over **\$6.5 billion** in economic activity;
- [Capital investments for ports, terminals, and waterway infrastructure](#) totaling nearly **\$1.4 billion** since 2018; and
- [World-renowned birding opportunities](#) that attract **80,000 birders** from 50 states and all seven continents for Ohio’s annual 10-day Biggest Week in American Birding festival, generating a regional economic influx of more than **\$40 million**.

Investing in Ohio’s Communities

The [Great Lakes Restoration Initiative](#) (GLRI) is supporting the implementation of a comprehensive cleanup plan that has been broadly endorsed by the region’s governors, cities, conservation groups, business and industry. Established in 2009, the GLRI builds on years of work to identify solutions to key problems facing the Great Lakes, including addressing the impacts of aquatic invasive species, cleaning up contaminated sediments, controlling polluted runoff, restoring degraded wetlands and conserving and enhancing fish and wildlife resources.

Economic Benefits from Restoring the Great Lakes

Restoring the Great Lakes advances our region’s broader strategy to create jobs, stimulate economic development, and invest in freshwater resources and waterfront communities. A research team led by the Great Lakes Commission coordinated a study that found every dollar of federal spending on GLRI projects between 2010 and 2016 will produce \$3.35 in additional economic activity in the region through 2036. Another study by The Brookings Institution found that fully implementing the Great Lakes restoration strategy would generate tens of billions of dollars in benefits; specifically in Ohio, \$2.1 billion to \$3.7 billion would benefit the Cleveland metro area alone.

Improving and Protecting Lake Erie

The GLRI supports state and local efforts to improve and maintain the quality of Lake Erie. A healthier lake supports fish and wildlife, attracting outdoor recreationists who contribute to the region's economy and ongoing conservation efforts.

■ **Managing Harmful Algal Blooms**

Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) not only threaten recreation and tourism on Lake Erie, but also drinking water for millions of people in the region. To prevent HABs from affecting the Lake Erie watershed, the GLRI directs funding to federal, state, and local agencies to detect and respond to algal blooms, measure nutrient levels in Lake Erie tributaries, support projects to reduce nutrient loads, and enable farmers to reduce nutrient runoff – most notably in the Maumee River watershed.

■ **Protecting and Enhancing Lake Erie Harbors**

Harbors, small and large alike, provide vast benefits to Ohio's economy and recreational opportunities. Ohio's seven federal shallow-draft and recreational harbors are at risk of infrastructure degradation due to a severe backlog of dredging and infrastructure needs. In the Great Lakes Navigation System, it is estimated that there is currently a dredging backlog in shallow draft, recreational harbors of approximately three million cubic yards of material. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers estimates that the backlog could be addressed and all shallow draft harbors could be adequately dredged at an estimated cost of \$8 million annually.

■ **Improving Coastal and Riverine Wetlands and Ecosystems through H2Ohio**

In northwest Ohio, state H2Ohio and federal GLRI funds are being used to restore water quality focused wetlands, coastal marshes, and important fish and wildlife habitats in Sandusky Bay and in the Maumee River. Additionally, NOAA Transformational Habitat funding is being used to construct nature-based barrier wetlands to improve water quality and fish & wildlife habitat in Sandusky Bay. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service GLRI and state H2Ohio funds have been used to design and construct innovative water control and fish access structures to manage water levels to enhance wetland plant diversity and to provide access to shallow-water spawning and nursery habitats within coastal wetlands.

■ **Protecting the Great Lakes from Aquatic Invasive Species**

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are a major threat to native wildlife and actions are needed to prevent their establishment. Only through preventative actions can AIS be effectively managed. Using GLRI funding, Ohio has been able to close direct hydraulic connections between the Mississippi River and Great Lakes basins as identified in the Great Lakes Mississippi River Interbasin Study (GLMRIS). Two medium risk GLMRIS connections have been closed to the movement of AIS like invasive carp to prevent them from entering the Great Lakes at the Ohio Erie Canal in Akron, Ohio and the Little Killbuck Creek in Lodi, Ohio. Ohio is also using GLRI funds to monitor for AIS in high-risk pathways like the bait trade to prevent establishment.

■ **Restoring Fish and Wildlife Habitat**

In Ohio, the epicenter of the state's growing bald eagle population is the western basin of Lake Erie. Habitat restoration in the Lake Erie region and investments from conservation organizations helped [bald eagles](#) bounce back from a low of four nesting pairs in 1979 to an estimated 964 pairs statewide in 2025. The restoration of Lake Erie's aquatic ecosystem also helped walleye populations, leading the Ohio portion of Lake Erie to become known as [The Walleye Capital of the World](#).

Ohio also benefits from GLRI funding to restore its three remaining [Areas of Concern](#) (AOCs). GLRI funding has led to major milestones for Ohio's AOCs, including the delisting of the [Ashtabula River AOC](#) in 2021 and the completion of all management actions at the [Black River AOC](#) in 2024. Two beneficial uses were restored in Ohio in 2024, one each at the Cuyahoga River and Maumee AOCs.

In the [Maumee River](#), the GLRI-funded Delaware/Horseshoe and H2Ohio-funded Clark Island projects were jointly designed and are being constructed simultaneously in a cooperative effort between the Maumee AOC and the H2Ohio programs. These projects will restore degraded fish and wildlife habitat and improve Maumee River water quality. Additionally, GLRI funding assisted with the 177 acre expansion of the Maumee State Forest. Some of these sites on the land acquired have converted farmland to either wetland or forest, restoring important wildlife habitat. ODNR currently has 5 active GLRI awards across 7 projects, totaling \$7.3 million in Focus area 3 and 4 funds to complete projects with local partners that improve water quality and habitat opportunities around Lake Erie.

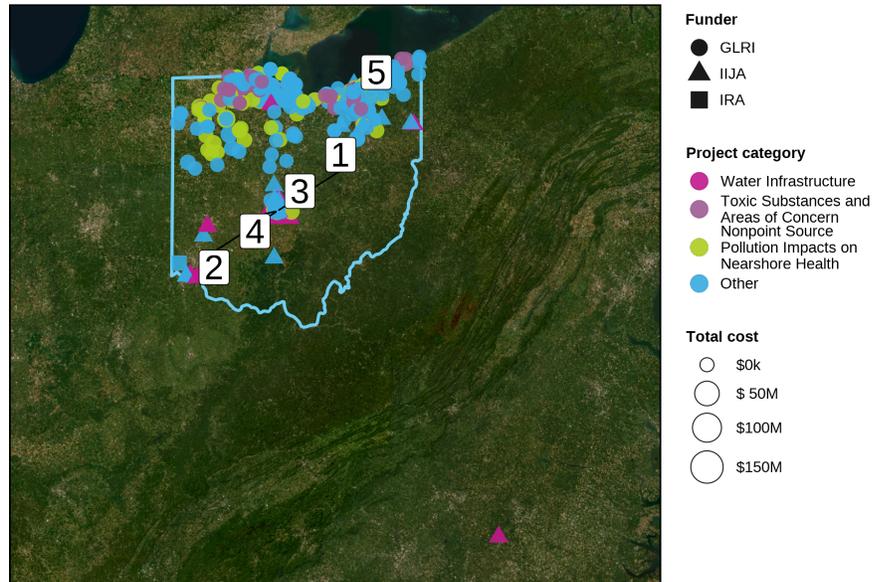
All this work and investment from local, state, and federal partners is providing for a more prosperous future for the Lake Erie region. Continued investment in the GLRI and commitment from partners at all levels of government will ensure that Lake Erie and the Great Lakes region will be a vital economic asset for decades.

The State of Ohio

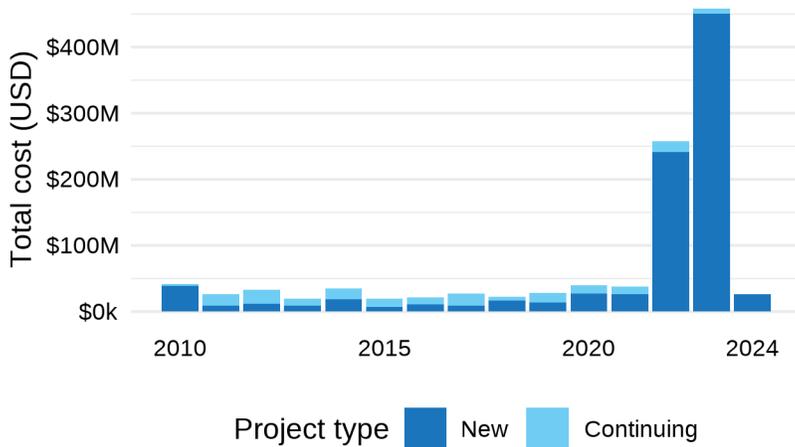
As of 2024, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) have funded 693 projects within the State of Ohio, 204 of which have received additional funding after their first year. IRA and IIJA funding included in this report and in the Investment Tracker reflect only those programs directly related to Great Lakes Commission priorities.

The top-funded projects in the state are numbered in the map and detailed in the table below.

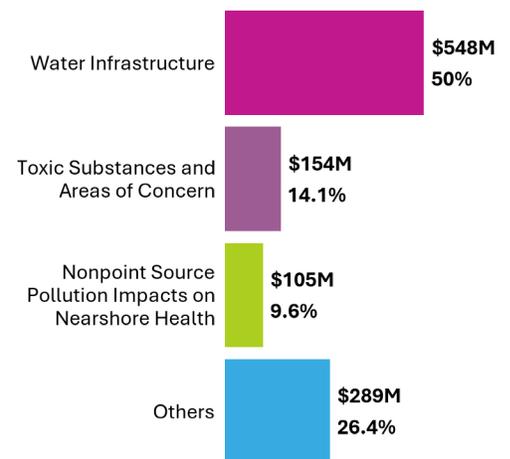
Learn more about these and other projects across the Great Lakes states at investments.glc.org.



Total amount funded per year



Funding per category



Top-funded projects - Ohio

#	Funder	Year	Project title	Recipient	Total funded
1	IIJA	2023	Drinking Water State Revolving Fund	State of Ohio Office of Budget and Management State Accounting	\$166,913,000
2	IIJA	2023	Clean Water State Revolving Fund	State of Ohio Office of Budget and Management State Accounting	\$110,214,500
3	IIJA	2022	Capitalization Grants for Drinking Water State Revolving Funds	State of Ohio Office of Budget and Management State Accounting	\$71,300,000
4	IIJA	2023	Drinking Water State Revolving Fund	State of Ohio Office of Budget and Management State Accounting	\$52,301,700
5	IIJA	2022	Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects	Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency	\$49,921,423

Note: This report was automatically generated using data from U.S. federal government databases. Locations are approximate. See investments.glc.org for more information.