



Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

Talking Points and Key Messages

The following are suggested talking points and key messages in support of the \$475 Million Great Lakes Restoration Initiative included in the President's proposed FY2010 budget. Additional background is available on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's website at <http://epa.gov/greatlakes/glri/index.html>.

Congress needs to show its support for the Great Lakes by fully funding the Administration's proposal:

President Obama has proposed a strong program that will build on past investments, yield on-the-ground outcomes and generate sorely needed economic benefits for the Great Lakes. Now is the time for Congress to take action to support the Great Lakes by fully funding the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. The states and local communities have committed millions to cleaning up the Great Lakes. Accelerating these efforts requires a full partnership with the federal government – one that leverages the full range of policies and programs in the federal agencies, in collaboration with state and local partners. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative will fulfill the federal commitment to implement a comprehensive restoration plan for the Great Lakes. *Congress must step up and make Great Lakes restoration more than just a plan, but a reality.*

The Great Lakes are critical to our region and our nation: The Great Lakes are an economic driver for the eight-state Great Lakes region and for our nation as a whole. The lakes include 20% of the world's supply of fresh surface water and 90% of our country's fresh surface water. The lakes provide drinking water for 40 million people; transportation for raw materials and finished goods; water for our industries; recreation for our citizens; and a vibrant ecosystem for diverse communities of plants and animals. *The Great Lakes fuelled our region's economic development in the past and are a vital asset for revitalizing our regional economy in the future.*

The Great Lakes face serious problems that must be addressed: The value of the Great Lakes is compromised by invasive species, water pollution, degraded habitat for fish and wildlife, and a legacy of toxic contaminants in our rivers and harbors. Halting the introduction and spread of invasive species, reducing pollution, cleaning up toxic hot spots and restoring valuable fish and wildlife resources will maximize the economic value of the lakes and ensure that they support the people and communities that depend on them. *The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is an unprecedented opportunity to help our region address these challenges, while creating jobs and stimulating economic development.*

We have a regional strategy – as well as state and local plans – to effectively address these problems:

Building on years of research, monitoring and planning, the Great Lakes region has collaborated to build a comprehensive strategy for solving the problems affecting the lakes. Developed with input from more than 1,500 stakeholders, the 2005 Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy reflects the Governors' priorities, defines the problems, outlines solutions, and provides clear goals and objectives for measuring progress. The Strategy is accepted by government agencies, business and industry, and environmental organizations as the primary blueprint for cleaning up the Great Lakes. In addition, several of the Great Lakes states have developed plans for addressing Great Lakes problems within their jurisdiction. Each of the 30 U.S. Areas of Concern – or "toxic hot spots" – has cleanup plans with measurable, science-based restoration targets. Other plans are in place for specific priorities, such as restoring and conserving habitat and controlling aquatic invasive species. *In short, we know how to use this funding to address real problems; we will spend it in the "right places;" and we will produce real, on-the-ground improvements for our environment and our economy.*

The region is united and federal agencies and state and local partners are collaborating effectively:

Using the Great Lakes restoration strategy as a foundation, federal and state agencies are collaborating to use resources effectively to address the most serious problems affecting the Great Lakes. Interagency teams are addressing degraded habitat, toxic hot spots, invasive species, contaminated beaches, and other issues. The states have developed plans to implement the restoration strategy at the state level in coordination with federal agencies and local partners. *In brief, the institutional and policy infrastructure is in place to effectively administer large-scale funding for Great Lakes restoration.*

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State and local governments are already contributing significantly: The new Federal support is not a handout. It will match the substantial funding that state and local governments and nongovernmental organizations are investing in the Great Lakes. For example, a GAO study in 2003 found that state spending exceeded that of the federal government. The GLC/Mayor's study last year shows that local governments in the US are spending an estimated \$11 billion each year on Great Lakes restoration activities. *The funding proposed for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative will make the federal government an equal partner with the Great Lakes states, local governments and citizens groups in restoring the Great Lakes.*

The Great Lakes region's economy is struggling. The Great Lakes are key to our economic revitalization: The eight-state Great Lakes region is suffering the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. As a region, we need to leverage all of our assets – our people, our educational institutions, our economic infrastructure, and our natural resources. *The Great Lakes are our region's most valuable natural resource; it only makes sense that we should maximize the benefits they provide.*

Restoring the Great Lakes is not just about the environment, but jobs and our regional economy: The Brookings Institution has estimated that implementing the Great Lakes restoration strategy will generate \$50 billion in long-term benefits. A coalition of more than 30 metropolitan Chambers of Commerce in the Great Lakes region has highlighted Great Lakes restoration as a critical component of a larger agenda for creating jobs and revitalizing our regional economy. Areas where cleanups have been completed are planning important waterfront redevelopment projects. Cleaning up contaminated sediments, alone, is projected to increase coastal property values by \$12 to \$19 billion. Boating, fishing, hunting and wildlife watching in the Great Lakes region generate over \$50 billion in economic activity annually and generate hundreds of thousands of jobs. Abundant fresh water, recreational amenities, and other benefits from the Great Lakes will be vital for attracting new industries and young workers in the future. The Great Lakes give our region a unique, competitive advantage in attracting jobs and investment in a global economy. *By working together, we have an unprecedented opportunity to create jobs, stimulate economic development and invest in our nation's freshwater resources that will be central to the future of the eight-state Great Lakes region.*