

GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITIATIVE FUNDS INVASIVE SPECIES WORK

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The protection and restoration of the Great Lakes will be advanced with the allocation of \$475 million in new funding for fiscal year 2010. This funding is the result of a long awaited commitment by the federal government to the region known as the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). Proposed by President Obama and approved by Congress in 2009, the GLRI is an interagency program signaling the start of a new era of recovery for the Great Lakes region by making our freshwater resource a national priority. The GLRI will empower stakeholders across the basin to combat the assault of chemical and biological pollution threatening the region's economic and ecological health.

The GLRI builds on the significant work of the region to identify priorities and develop a plan to restore the Great Lakes. The culmination of this work was the *Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes* (GLRC), released in late 2005. With input from governors, state agency officials, mayors, tribes, industry and non-governmental organizations, the GLRC identified priority areas for restoration work, including invasive species. This theme is carried forward in the GLRI, which makes efforts to stop the introduction and spread of invasive species one of its primary focus areas.

This year the GLRI includes over \$60 million for invasive species work. This money will be spent on federally managed projects, as well as on awards to non-federal entities. In November 2009, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a request for proposals that included \$12.4 million for invasive species projects in four key areas: ballast water treatment technology; prevention and control; threat, distribution, and early detection; and forecasting and synthesis of ecosystem effects. The EPA will fund projects showing potential to significantly reduce the introduction and spread of invasive species from high priority vectors, as well as to improve surveillance and response capability to detect and eradicate new invasions. Award announcements are expected by June of this year.

In December 2009, the EPA announced it would also be spending \$13 million in GLRI funds on emergency actions to prevent the spread of Asian carp into the Great Lakes. The majority of funding will be used by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to close conduits and shore up low-lying lands between the Chicago Sanitary Ship Canal and adjacent waterways. There is significant concern that heavy rain or flooding will allow water and carp to wash from adjacent waterways into the canal, facilitating the carp's migration towards Lake Michigan.

It is widely recognized that one year of GLRI funding is insufficient to accomplish all of the work that is needed to combat invasive species. The GLRI is intended to be a multi-year effort that will move the region down the path of recovery. The region will also be held accountable and expected to show progress along the way. To guide implementation of the GLRI, the EPA – the agency charged with leading the GLRI – has developed the *Great Lakes Multi-year Restoration Action Plan* (Action Plan).

The Action Plan lays out a set of goals, objectives and measures to track progress on the five priority areas identified for restoration under the GLRI over the next five years. To ensure the GLRI and the Action Plan are set up to effectively meet the needs of the region, the

EPA, with assistance from the Great Lakes Commission, held a series of stakeholder meetings to gather input. The meetings were well attended; more than 1,000 participants were recorded, engaging the Great Lakes states, cities, tribes and other stakeholders. The EPA re-released the Action Plan in December 2009 reflecting input on the document from stakeholders around the region.

The Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species (Panel) recognizes the GLRI as a chance to implement critically needed invasive species prevention and control projects on a broad scale. Taking a regional approach to invasive species will be integral to ensuring restoration goals are met. Led by Jim Grazio, Pennsylvania Dept. of Environmental Protection and Panel Chair, the Panel recommended to EPA that the GLRI take full advantage of the institutional capacity of the Panel, given its coordinative role in addressing AIS problems across the region. Under the GLRI, this could include regional coordination of surveillance programs and rapid response initiatives.

The lack of adequate funding on both a state and regional level has been one of the greatest challenges to effective prevention and control of invasive species in the Great Lakes region. The GLRI is an unprecedented opportunity to build on years of research, monitoring and planning and finally implement critical restoration and protection activities. While money alone will not completely resolve the environmental problems facing the Great Lakes, the level of funding provided through the GLRI holds tremendous potential for the development and implementation of viable solutions. The entire region has been waiting for this day and is ready for the work to begin.

Washington Watch

In October 2009, Congress approved and the President signed an Interior and Environment appropriations bill that included \$475 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. This funding is being distributed by the EPA to other federal agencies as well as through grants to state, local and other partners. In September 2009, the U.S. Coast Guard issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPR) on *Standards for Living Organisms in Ships' Ballast Water Discharged in U.S. Waters*. The proposed rulemaking lays out a two-phase standard for the allowable concentration of living organisms in ships' ballast water discharge. The phase-one standard is based upon the International Maritime Organization (IMO) standard and the phase-two standard is based on the strongest U.S. state regulations which are 1,000 times more stringent than IMO. The rulemaking also includes implementation timetables and requirements for practicability review and technology approval. The 90-day public comment period on the NPR closed on December 4. In January 2009, the House introduced legislation (H.R. 669) to prevent the importation of high risk nonnative wildlife species given their potential to disrupt the economy, the environment, human health or native wildlife. A House Natural Resources Subcommittee held hearings on the bill, but no vote has taken place. The Senate is currently working on similar legislation. **Contact:** Erika Jensen, Great Lakes Commission, 734-971-9135, ejensen@glc.org.

Around the Basin:

ILLINOIS: Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant (IISG) has begun a new project to develop a database of state and federally regulated species. This database will help increase awareness of the regulations among trade industries, thus minimizing the potential for prohibited species to be traded and introduced into the system. IISG has also initiated a teachers' survey in Illinois for a project addressing the "AIS-in-the-classroom" pathway, which is being led by Oregon Sea Grant. A new Asian carp processing facility, Heartland Processing, had their grand opening celebration in May. The projected processing capacity of the facility is 3.5 tons of fish per hour running two shifts per day. **Contact:** Patrice Charlebois, IISG, 847-242-6441, charlebo@illinois.edu.

INDIANA: Indiana DNR continues aggressive action against invasive plants that have recently been found in the state. Lake Manitou hydrilla eradication is in its third year. As a result of two consecutive years of whole-lake Sonar treatments, the hydrilla tuber population has been reduced by 93 percent. Eradication of parrot feather at Meserve Lake, a small natural lake in northeast Indiana, began in the fall of 2008 and continued in 2009. The chemical controls have shown promising success. DNR is partnering with a number of entities to increase momentum on AIS prevention and control. A working group of DNR, IISG, Univ. of Notre Dame, The Nature Conservancy and others has developed an aquatic plant risk assessment tool. DNR hopes to develop a white list of aquatic plants that can be used in trade in Indiana. In the recent state legislative session a bill was passed to create an Indiana Invasive Species Council. **Contact:** Doug Keller, IN DNR, 317-234-3883, dkeller@dnr.in.gov.

MICHIGAN: The state released its MI-Great Lakes Plan which includes specific recommendations to address AIS issues. A workshop was held to identify near-term actions to improve coordination of AIS management. In addition to ongoing phragmites work in Saginaw Bay, DNR has received funding for invasive species control, including phragmites, on public and private lands. The state has also received funding for an early detection, monitoring, rapid response and public education effort for phragmites in northwestern Michigan. Public workshops are being held on phragmites impacts and options to early detect and control spread. A bill was introduced to create civil fines for transporting aquatic plants on boats and equipment. The authority for listing and delisting species, and defining "prohibited" and "restricted" species under Michigan's invasive species law now lies with the DNR and Dept. of Agriculture. New prohibited species include cylindropermopsis, fanwort, starry stonewort, rusty crayfish, Eurasian ruffe and round and tubenose gobies. Quagga and zebra mussels are now restricted. **Contact:** Emily Finnell, MI DEQ, 517-335-4227, finnelle@michigan.gov.

MINNESOTA: The DNR continued to provide grant funding to local cooperators for prevention and management of invasive species in Minnesota. The grants, coupled with the DNR's 80 watercraft inspectors and eight new enforcement officers have increased prevention efforts significantly statewide. Management grant funding focused on management of Eurasian water milfoil, curly-leaf pondweed and flowering rush. The Minnesota Court of Appeals upheld the state's general permit for ballast water discharges in Minnesota waters of Lake Superior. The permit is designed to prevent ship-mediated spread of invasive species. The court determined that the state's technical analysis was reasonable and that the permit complies with state water quality standards. **Contact:** Luke Skinner, MN DNR, 651-259-5140, Luke.Skinner@dnr.state.mn.us.

NEW YORK: A Council of nine agencies and an Advisory Committee of 25 NGOs are charged with implementing the state invasive species program. The New York Invasive Species Research Institute was created at Cornell University. An Invasive Species Clearinghouse is under development by New York Sea Grant to provide species-specific information. An iMap GIS database is being created in collaboration with New York Natural Heritage Program. The Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Partnership now receives major support from the state and contracts are in process with the seven remaining regional partnerships for invasive species management (PRISMs). Conditions added to EPA's Vessel General Permit to meet state water quality standards were upheld by the State Supreme Court. A small watershed in southeastern New York was treated with rotenone to eradicate a population of Northern snakehead. **Contact:** Dave Adams, NYS DEC, 518-402-9149, djadams@gw.dec.state.ny.us.

OHIO: Ohio's newly formed AIS Committee is made up of government, industry, academia, and NGOs and has held several meetings to date. These meetings include invited presentations, discussion of relevant issues, and the revision of Ohio's State Management Plan. Ohio Sea Grant sent out two publications (*Great Lakes Aquatic Invasions and Invasive Species in Ohio - Pathways, Policies, and Costs*) to the Governor, state legislators, and selected Mayors and County Commissioners along Lake Erie to educate them on issues related to AIS in Ohio. **Contact:** John Navarro, ODNR Division of Wildlife, 614-265-6346, john.navarro@dnr.state.oh.us

ONTARIO: Ontario is in the final year of completing mandatory HACCP requirements for licensed bait harvesters and dealers. Harvesting and removal of water chestnut continues on the Ottawa River to eradicate the only known wild infestation in Ontario. Plans are underway for chemical and manual removal of water soldier at a site on the Trent River; the only known wild occurrence in N. America. Ontario is working with U.S. partners on a "live organisms in classrooms" project. Summer programs featured seasonal staff leading community outreach initiatives, forming the "Invasive Species Hit Squad," attending community events, conducting boat launch inspections and visiting provincial parks. A series of radio public service announcements was launched, with segments on boating, fishing, hiking, firewood, ATVs, and gardening. Volunteer inland lake monitoring for zebra mussels and spiny water flea targeted approximately 120 lakes this summer. **Contact:** Francine MacDonald, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, 705-748-6324, francinem@ofah.org.

PENNSYLVANIA: A Comprehensive Invasive Species Management Plan, which covers both terrestrial and aquatic species, has been finalized and will work in conjunction with the existing state AIS management plan. The Penn. Fish and Boat Commission and Penn. Sea Grant hosted an event to inform divers of precautions to prevent the spread of nonnative mussels and to invite them to participate in monitoring efforts. Sea Grant has also received funding to develop a state-specific AIS field guide for use by water conservation officers and others. The training video *Stemming the Tide: A Guide to Monitoring Zebra & Quagga Mussels in Pennsylvania* is available at seagrant.psu.edu/zm/. **Contact:** Jim Grazio, PA DEP, 814-217-9636, jagrazio@state.pa.us.

QUÉBEC: The Québec inter-ministerial committee on invasive species is working on priority species lists; invasive species fact sheets; a mechanism to share information between the ministries and agencies; a code of best practices for employees; and an early detection network on invasive plants. The water chestnut eradication program is continues, as well as Didymo and VHS monitoring programs. A French adaptation of the *Great Lakes Aquatic Invasions* booklet is in process. A rapid assessment was conducted for tunicates on Îles-de-la-Madeleine. **Contact:** Isabelle Simard, Québec Ministry of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks, 418-521-3907, isabelle.simard@mddep.gouv.qc.ca.

Great Lakes Panel Update

The spring meeting of the Panel was held June 25-26, 2009 in Grand Island, New York. The fall meeting of the Panel was held December 10-11, 2009 in Ann Arbor, Mich. Meeting topics included ballast water, the GLRI, Asian carp and pathogen surveillance and early alerts, among others. Meeting materials are available at www.glc.org/ans/panel.html#glpmeet. **Contact:** Kathe Glassner-Shwayder, Great Lakes Commission, 734-971-9135, shwayder@glc.org.

ANS Task Force

The spring 2009 meeting of the ANS Task Force (ANSTF) was held in Bozeman, Montana in May. The fall 2009 meeting was held November 4-5 in Silver Spring, Maryland. Meeting information is available at www.anstaskforce.gov/meetings.php. **Contact:** Susan Mangin, ANSTF Executive Secretary, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 703-358-2466, Susan_Mangin@fws.gov.