

# Great Lakes, a National Resource, Is Victim of National Neglect

Statement by Jeff Skelding, National Campaign Director, Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition

on New Report by Great Lakes Commission and Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (February 27)** – “This report underscores that the Great Lakes – a national resource – is the victim of national neglect.

“Despite the recognized importance of the Great Lakes as an economic engine and environmental masterpiece for the nation, the lakes have had to rely primarily on local governments to fight pollution and generally stay healthy.

“This report sends a clear message to lawmakers in Washington, D.C.: Stop short-changing the Great Lakes.

“The longer you neglect the health of the lakes the more costly the lakes’ medical bills will be in the future.

“For several years, a disturbing trend has emerged in our nation’s Capitol: Escalating problems from sewage contamination, invasive species and other threats have been met with cuts to essential federal programs to improve the health of the Great Lakes.

“This is not a winning formula. Frankly, we can do better. We have manageable solutions to restore a national resource that millions of people depend on for their jobs and way of life.

“That’s why more than 150 Great Lakes citizens are in town today and tomorrow – to urge national leaders to embrace solutions to prevent invasive species from entering the lakes, to clean up toxic pollution in the most polluted waters—the so-called areas of concern—and to uphold protections to wetlands and other waters.

“Our message to Congress is this: We have solutions. It is time to use them. Because every day we wait, the problems get worse and the solutions more costly. It is time to act now to restore our Great Lakes, our public health, our economy and our way of life.

“It’s important to recognize that we have champions in Congress who are fighting for these programs. To those who are battling for Great Lakes programs, we support you. Now, we need Congress, as a whole, to stand and deliver for the Great Lakes and the millions of people who depend on them for their jobs and way of life.

“The challenges facing the Great Lakes are serious. And we can meet these challenges. But local communities cannot do it alone. We need the federal government to do its fair share as well.”

For more information visit: <http://www.healthylakes.org/>

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**Contact:**

Jeff Skelding, Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, 410-245-8021

Jordan Lubetkin, National Wildlife Federation, 734-904-1589