



FEDERAL FUNDING FOR GREAT LAKES-ST. LAWRENCE RESTORATION LAGS FAR BEHIND LOCAL INVESTMENT, NEW REPORT FINDS

Report Estimates \$15 billion in Local Spending as Officials Warn Feds That Continued Funding Shortages Will Jeopardize the Future of the Resource

WASHINGTON, D.C. (February 27) -- A report released today by the Great Lakes Commission and the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (Cities Initiative) and funded by the Joyce Foundation, concludes that local governments in the U.S. and Canada invest an estimated \$15 billion annually to protect and restore the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River, but cannot keep pace with the one-two punch of escalating threats to the resource and ongoing cuts in federal restoration programs.

“This report clearly demonstrates that our cities and other communities are ready and willing partners in the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence ecosystem,” said Michigan Lt. Gov. John Cherry, chair of the Great Lakes Commission. “Their contributions at the local level play a key role in the environmental health and well-being of the entire system, and they need and deserve federal support in those efforts.”

“This study makes it clear that there is a growing movement that recognizes the need for long-term funding for Great Lakes protection and restoration, but it also suggests that we need to do more,” said Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago, founding U.S. chair of the Cities Initiative. “All our cities desperately need significant funding for water and wastewater infrastructure, but it’s still not on the radar of the national government and it’s time for them to step up and help protect this precious natural resource.”

Results from the 143 U.S. and Canadian local governments that responded to the survey document 2006 local investment at \$2.5 billion on water quality management activities, including wastewater systems operation, maintenance and infrastructure, and \$784 million on ecosystem protection activities such as greenspace protection and recycling/reuse programs. By extrapolating to incorporate the entire survey population of 688 local governments, which included cities, towns, villages, counties, regional municipalities and conservation authorities, the estimated local government investment is \$15 billion annually, with \$12 billion for water quality management and \$3 billion for ecosystem protection.

“We embarked on this survey because we knew that in day-to-day operations, local governments invest a great deal in Great Lakes and St. Lawrence protection and restoration, but we did not have hard numbers,” said Mayor David Miller of Toronto, founding Canadian chair of the Cities Initiative. “Now we can make the case to our Federal Governments that they must significantly increase their investment and introduce dedicated funding in Canada for critical protection efforts like wastewater treatment systems in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence region.”

The survey found that in both the United States and Canada, local investment was highest in the area of wastewater systems operation, maintenance and infrastructure. U.S. survey results alone indicate that local government makes capital investments in wastewater infrastructure in the Great Lakes Basin at well over 10 times the U.S. federal government. Federal funding through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) has been cut by 49 percent since 2004 and more cuts are proposed for 2009. When viewed in light of the survey results, these cuts only amplify the need for Congress to restore funding of the CWSRF to \$1.35 billion.

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“We all share the responsibility for this resource,” said Mayor Gary Becker of Racine, current Cities Initiative chair. “How can it be that U.S. and Canadian local governments spend an estimated \$12 billion a year on crucial water and wastewater systems and operations that help keep the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence waters protected and our Federal Governments cannot even fund \$1 billion for these critical systems in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Basin? Any future federal cuts for wastewater infrastructure are totally unacceptable.”

The report is expected to build support in the United States for federal legislation to implement recommendations of the 2005 *Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes* – the product of a year-long initiative among federal, state and local governments, tribes and other stakeholders that was established by a presidential executive order. Among the Strategy’s foremost recommendations to protect and restore the Great Lakes is increased federal investment in storm-and wastewater treatment, to supplement the substantial local investment documented in the report.

“The report underscores the need for the federal government to lend a hand to local communities on the front line in the fight to restore the Great Lakes, because every day we wait the problems get worse and the solutions more costly,” said Jeff Skelding, national campaign director for the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition. “We have solutions. It is time to use them to restore our lakes, our economy and our way of life.”

Another issue brought to light by the report is the need for better accounting of how much other orders of government spend on the resource. “While we know funding for various efforts has been decreasing over the years, there doesn’t seem to be an understanding of the aggregate that is currently being spent on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence by all orders of government, including on the Canadian side,” said Cities Initiative Vice chair Mayor Lynn Peterson of Thunder Bay. “Ideally, Canada would undertake an effort to understand what more needs to be done in Canada to further the protection of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence.”

For more information on the study and its findings, please visit www.glslcities.org or www.glc.org/glinvestment.

Founded in 2003 by Mayor Richard M. Daley, and joined by Mayor David Miller, the [Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative](#) is a binational coalition of mayors and other local officials that works actively with federal, state, provincial, tribal and first nation governments to advance the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River. The Cities Initiative has grown to include more than 50 member cities from across the Basin.

[The Great Lakes Commission](#), chaired by Lt. Gov. John Cherry (Mich.), is a nonpartisan, binational compact agency established under state and U.S. federal law and dedicated to promoting a strong economy, healthy environment and high quality of life for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region and its residents. The Commission consists of governors' appointees, state legislators, and agency officials from its [eight member states](#). [Associate membership](#) for Ontario and Québec was established through the signing of a "[Declaration of Partnership](#)." The Commission maintains a formal [Observer program](#) involving U.S. and Canadian federal agencies, tribal authorities, binational agencies and other regional interests. The Commission offices are located in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

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