



Presented to the 110th Congress, second session: February 2008

Investing in a National Treasure: Great Lakes Commission Legislative Priorities, FY2009

Now is the time to invest in the Great Lakes! In 2005 the Great Lakes region united behind the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes. States, cities, industries, tribal governments, and environmental organizations have endorsed this comprehensive restoration blueprint and are investing significant resources to implement its recommendations.

The federal government must step up and play an equal role. Our message to Congress is simple: the Great Lakes are an environmental and economic asset that merits a national investment equal to other ecosystem restoration initiatives. In 2008 the 32 million U.S. citizens of the Great Lakes region look to Congress for a down payment on Great Lakes restoration.

On behalf of its eight member states, the Great Lakes Commission presents the following legislative priorities to protect and enhance the quality of our region's environment and economy. The Commission's priorities respond to and will advance the recommendations of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy (www.gllrc.us). The Commission endorses the recommendations of the Council of Great Lakes Governors to Congress; the recommendations herein complement the governors' requests.

We urge Congress to address the following highest priority issues:

Aquatic Invasive Species

Legislation to curb introduction and spread of invasive species is the top 2008 priority of the Great Lakes Commission. We continue to urge Congress to enact comprehensive legislation such as S. 725 that will control invasive species from all pathways. However, if enactment of such legislation is not possible in 2008, Congress can take a major step by completing work started in 2007 to pass legislation to control ballast water discharges.

Ballast Water Legislation:

Congressional action is urgently needed to ensure that commercial vessels visiting Great Lakes ports meet uniform ballast water discharge requirements that protect the lakes from invasive species. Legislation in the House (H.R. 2830) and Senate (S. 1578) includes many essential

provisions. However, we urge Congress to fix flaws in the bills to ensure that technology is installed without delay and to allow states necessary flexibility to complement a federal program if it fails to protect the regional environment and economy.

Sea Lamprey Control:

Appropriate \$21.8M to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission for its Sea Lamprey Control Program that protects a multibillion-dollar sport fishery.

Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Implementation

The federal government must meet its commitments outlined in the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes. Elevated funding is needed to match significant investments being made by state and local governments and private entities in the Great Lakes region. A recent study conducted by the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative and the Great Lakes Commission shows that local governments alone are spending billions of dollars each year on Great Lakes restoration activities. Congress should pass legislation and provide funding to implement needed federal activities identified in the restoration blueprint.

Great Lakes Legacy Act:

Reauthorize and fully fund the Act at \$150M to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to remediate contaminated sediments in Areas of Concern (AOCs). The Great Lakes Legacy Act is vital for cleaning up Great Lakes "toxic hot spots" and must be reauthorized in 2008.

Restore Wetlands:

Appropriate \$28.5M to existing federal programs to continue restoration of 200,000 acres of wetlands toward the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration goal of restoring 550,000 acres. States, local governments and NGOs would raise an additional \$28.5M in nonfederal matching funds.

Protect Water Quality:

Funding was significantly cut in 2008 for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, a program which is essential to updating sewerage systems and improving coastal health in the Great Lakes and nationwide. Restore funding to this critical program by appropriating \$1.35B nationwide.



Additional Priorities for

In addition to the highest priorities presented on page 1, the Commission calls on Congress to support the following measures before the end of the 110th Congress:

Aquatic Invasive Species

Dispersal Barrier System:

In 2007 Congress authorized construction and operation of the dispersal barrier system in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal to prevent Asian carp and other invasive species from entering the Great Lakes. We appreciate congressional support for this critical project in 2008 and ask that funding be appropriated to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) as needed to complete the effort.

AIS Program Implementation:

Increase funding to current aquatic invasive species prevention and control programs, including:

- \$11.25M for the Section 1101 program to prevent the introduction and spread of AIS from vessels, including \$6M to U. S. Coast Guard (USCG), \$2.5M to USEPA and \$2.75M to the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force (ANSTF) [\$1.5M to U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and \$1.25M to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)];
- \$1M to USFWS to support the six regional AIS panels under the ANSTF;
- \$8M to USFWS to support state-specific AIS management plans; and
- \$1M to support model regional, state and local rapid response contingency strategies.

Coastal Health

Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health (BEACH) Act:

Increase current appropriations to \$20M nationwide, including \$3.8M to Great Lakes states. Reauthorize the BEACH Act through 2012 with an increase in the authorized funding level to \$40M and encourage USEPA to refine its formula for allocating funds under the Act to make it more equitable for states with longer coastlines and larger coastal populations.

Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA):

Reauthorize and fully fund the CZMA at \$120M nationwide for matching grants to support existing Great Lakes state CZM programs, which protect unique coastal resources, ensure adequate public access to the shore, and encourage coastal-dependent development that conserves natural features and avoids development in hazard areas. Appropriate \$60M nationally for the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation and Protection program, administered through the CZMA, which provides competitive grants to protect wetlands and other coastal lands of unique value.

Areas of Concern

AOC Cleanup Implementation:

In addition to reauthorizing and fully funding the Great Lakes Legacy Act, appropriate funds for three essential programs necessary for implementation of cleanup actions:

- \$10M to USEPA for distribution to the Great Lakes states and local advisory committees in the 30 U.S. AOCs to support development and implementation of Remedial Action Plans;

Great Lakes Protection and Restoration in FY2009

- \$1.7M to USEPA's Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO) for program administration; and
- \$3M to USACE for the Great Lakes Remedial Action Program to provide technical analyses and related support.

Restore Fish and Wildlife in the AOCs:

Build on successful cleanup efforts under the Great Lakes Legacy Act and other programs to restore fish and wildlife resources in the AOCs. Appropriate \$2M for NOAA's Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Program.

Toxic Pollutants

Toxics Reduction Program:

Appropriate \$2M to USEPA GLNPO to be distributed to the states and tribes to expand the program under the Great Lakes Initiative and continue mercury monitoring, fish contaminant assessments and community education.

Habitat and Species

Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act:

Appropriate \$16M to USFWS under the Act for grants to states, tribes and local governments to encourage cooperative conservation, restoration and management of fish and wildlife resources and habitat.

Riparian Restoration:

Pass legislation to authorize a Great Lakes Tributary River Restoration Act to provide cost-shared grants to locally managed restoration projects in priority watersheds and appropriate \$40M to USFWS for this program.

Nonpoint Source Pollution

Farm Security and Rural Investment Act:

Farm Bill conservation programs are a key mechanism for achieving the recommendations of the region's restoration blueprint. Reauthorize the Farm Bill to enhance conservation and improve water quality through soil erosion control, conservation and habitat quality enhancement programs.

Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control:

Reauthorize the program in the Farm Bill with language that maintains the current authorized level (\$5M) and ties the program to the priorities of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy. Appropriate \$5M to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for the program.

Buffer Strip Programs:

Appropriate \$66M to USDA to increase enrollment in buffer strip programs for water quality improvement in Great Lakes tributaries.

Section 319 Program:

Increase appropriations to USEPA for this national program, including \$82M to the Great Lakes states, to implement nonpoint source pollution controls that are critical to improving water quality.

Indicators and Information

Integrated Ocean Observing System:

Pass the Coastal and Ocean Observation System Act (S. 950) and appropriate \$150M annually to NOAA to implement the Act, with an equitable share to support the Great Lakes Observing System.

Water Resources Infrastructure

Low Water Levels:

Water levels on the upper Great Lakes (Superior, Michigan, Huron) have been extremely low since 2000, with Lake Superior establishing new record lows in 2007 and lakes Michigan and Huron reaching near-record lows. Appropriate \$3M to USACE to initiate engineering designs for compensation of prior human changes in the St. Clair River to offset the permanent lowering of lakes Michigan and Huron water levels identified by the International Joint Commission. The decision on whether to construct such compensation should be determined under binational diplomatic channels.

Water Resources Development Act (WRDA):

Implement significant Great Lakes provisions of the Act by providing appropriations for:

- Implementation of high priority projects consistent with the Lake St. Clair Comprehensive Management Plan;
- Initiation of contract work (cofferdam construction) on the Sault Ste. Marie (Soo) Lock Expansion Program;
- Design and construction of sea lamprey barriers and traps in the Great Lakes (Section 1135, WRDA 1986); and
- Expanded use of dredged sediment for projects in the public interest.

Channel and Harbor Maintenance:

Provide \$125M to USACE for the Great Lakes navigation Operations and Maintenance budget to maintain commercial harbors and navigation channels in the Great Lakes. Provide additional funding to USACE for maintaining access to authorized shallow-draft harbors in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system.

Sustainability

Clean Water Act Reauthorization:

Reauthorize the Clean Water Act with provisions that USEPA review prioritization formulas so that projects that reflect sustainable community development practices or advance sustainable development principles can be awarded higher priority for funding or a more favorable loan interest rate.

State Revolving Funds:

In addition to restoring funding for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, fully fund the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund and increase flexibility in how the funds may be used by states and local municipalities for upgrading water infrastructure to protect public health and improving water conservation and use efficiency.

Priorities for Core Federal Programs and Research

Federal agencies contribute to the restoration, protection and management of Great Lakes water resources, which includes cooperative efforts with Canada. The Commission endorses the recommendation of the Great Lakes governors that federal monitoring programs be reviewed and evaluated to ensure effective and efficient gathering and reporting of data and to eliminate any duplication of effort. Maintaining and enhancing the efforts of federal agencies requires the following federal funding:

International Joint Commission:

\$7M to the U.S. section to support projects associated with the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and Boundary Waters Treaty, including an Upper Great Lakes Study to investigate factors that affect water levels and flows and potential mitigation plans.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

National Sea Grant College Program: \$72M to support the national program with an appropriate distribution to the seven Great Lakes Sea Grant programs.

Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory: \$17.5M to continue high priority research including new habitat restoration and human health initiatives.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Great Lakes National Program Office: \$25M to continue high priority habitat protection and restoration programs, ecological monitoring and coordination of Lakewide Management Plans and Remedial Action Plan teams across the region.

Office of Research and Development: \$18M to continue research functions conducted by labs in Duluth, Minn., and Grosse Ile, Mich., particularly on toxic contaminant control, endocrine disruption and environmental indicators.

Persistent Toxins: \$4M to expand current efforts under the Great Lakes Air Deposition (GLAD) and Integrated Air Deposition Network (IADN) programs.

U.S. Geological Survey

Great Lakes Science Center: \$14.6M to support activities of the USGS Great Lakes Science Center, including deepwater fishery science and ecosystem research.

National Streamflow Information Program: \$17M nationally to expand coverage within the Great Lakes watersheds to monitor chemical, nutrient and sediment loadings.

Great Lakes Commission
Contacts: Tim Eder, teder@glc.org; Matt Doss, mdoss@glc.org
2805 S. Industrial Hwy., Suite 100, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-6791
Phone: 734-971-9135 • Fax: 734-971-9150

www.glc.org/restore

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