

Press Release

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Statewide council releases legislative priorities for cleaning up Michigan's Great Lakes “toxic hot spots”

With President Obama proposing a \$475 million initiative to clean up the Great Lakes, Michigan has an unprecedented opportunity to invest in the lakes and leverage them to advance the state’s economic and environmental health. This is the core message presented today by a coalition of local advisory councils working to clean up Michigan’s 14 Great Lakes “toxic hot spots” – known as Areas of Concern.

“The health of Michigan's waterways and lakes will play a critical role in determining the success of Michigan's economic recovery, and our ability to create sustainable prosperity for our children and grandchildren,” said Lieutenant Governor John Cherry. “From Torch Lake to the River Raisin, it is clear that when we protect our water, we are protecting jobs, families and communities.”

“Michigan is the Great Lakes state. The lakes fueled our state’s development and they will be a critical resource for revitalizing our economy in the future,” stated Kathy Evans, chair of the Statewide Public Advisory Council for Michigan’s Great Lakes Areas of Concern Program. “With the President’s commitment – and support from Congress – we can finish cleaning up these areas and maximize the benefits they provide for our communities,” she added.



The Council presented its *2009 Status Report and Legislative Agenda* at a briefing for the state legislature in Lansing. The Council’s report highlights progress in cleaning up Michigan’s 14 toxic hot spots, including

- 330,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediments cleaned up;
- \$21 million in federal funds secured for cleanup work;
- \$50 million in large-scale fish and wildlife restoration projects proposed for federal support;
- science-based cleanup goals established to measure progress; and
- five environmental impairments removed.

The Council’s agenda for the state legislature includes three key items needed to sustain progress in cleaning up Michigan’s Great Lakes resources:

- maximize Michigan’s potential to secure federal funding for the Great Lakes;
- establish sustainable funding for programs that protect Michigan’s air, land and water; and
- develop a new bond program to follow the Clean Michigan Initiative.

The complete report is online at <http://glc.org/spac/>

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The Council's legislative briefing was co-sponsored by Lt. Gov. John D. Cherry, Jr.; Sen. Patty Birkholz (R-Saugatuck Township), chair of the Senate Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee; and Rep. Rebekah Warren (D-Ann Arbor), chair of the House Committee on Great Lakes and Environment.

The briefing also showcased a recent report from a coalition of metropolitan Chambers of Commerce that outlines a business agenda for restoring economic competitiveness in the Great Lakes. The report, *An Agenda for Jobs and Economic Transformation in the Great Lakes Region*, highlights the importance of restoring the Great Lakes as part of a broader agenda for advancing economic development in the region. Brian Kandler, director of Government Relations, Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce, presented the report's findings to the legislature. Michigan Chambers that contributed to the report include Detroit, Grand Rapids, Ann Arbor, Traverse City, Kalamazoo, Lansing, Muskegon and the Northwest Michigan Regional Chamber Alliance.

"No matter what steps we take to revitalize our economy, I continue to insist that the cornerstone of our state's efforts must be the protection of our Great Lakes," said Sen. Patty Birkholz, (R-Saugatuck Township). "We have taken significant steps at the state level to ensure the integrity of these lakes, but we must have the full support of our federal government to take the full measure of protection," said Birkholz.

"As legislators of the Great Lakes state, it is our responsibility to protect these crown jewels, which define our shoreline and hold the key to our economic growth," said Rep. Rebekah Warren, Chair of the House Committee on Great Lakes and Environment. "I look forward to continued action by the federal government to clean up these areas and pledge to do all I can to support their efforts at the state level."

"With one fifth of the world's fresh water, the Great Lakes offer a natural solution, one that is a competitive advantage for attracting jobs and investment in a global economy," stated Brian Kandler, Director, Government Relations, for the Detroit Regional Chamber. "We support leveraging investment from the federal government to ensure clean and abundant fresh water and building industry-university partnerships to develop expertise in fresh water technologies," he added.

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The Statewide Public Advisory Council is a coalition of local advisory councils that works with state, federal and local agencies in cleaning up Michigan's 14 Great Lakes Areas of Concern. Background on the Council, including a list of Council members, as well as information on Michigan's Great Lakes Areas of Concern is available from the Statewide Public Advisory Council's website at <http://www.glc.org/spac/>.