



Lake Michigan near Traverse City, Michigan



# Harnessing Historic Investment

Great Lakes Commission 2022 Federal Priorities

**T**he eight-state, binational Great Lakes basin sustains a **\$6 trillion economy**, contains more than **90% of North America's supply of surface freshwater**, and provides drinking water for more than **40 million people** in the United States and Canada.

Harnessing historic federal investment in Great Lakes infrastructure, resiliency, and restoration will address longstanding needs while **creating jobs, fostering equity, protecting public health, and strengthening local communities**. Investing in planning and capacity to maximize these investments will take the Great Lakes basin to the next level.

## The Great Lakes Commission urges Congress and the Biden administration to:

**Build a resilient Great Lakes basin**

**Fully fund the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative**

**Expand efforts to address harmful algal blooms**

**Strengthen the Great Lakes Navigation System**

**Protect against invasive species**

**Upgrade infrastructure to ensure equitable access to clean and safe water**

**Support coordinated regional science and data collection**

**Fund the GLC to fulfill its unique role in the region**

These priorities reflect well-established needs and opportunities for strengthening the economic and environmental health of the Great Lakes basin. They enjoy broad support among state and local leaders, business and industry, and the environmental community. **Investing in these priorities will foster a more equitable Great Lakes region, increase economic opportunity, and improve the health of important ecosystems throughout the Great Lakes basin.**





## Support federal, tribal, state, and local actions to ensure the economy and environment of the Great Lakes region are resilient to the adverse impacts of a changing climate

- Fund the Army Corps' Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study to develop a collaborative, risk-based decision framework that identifies opportunities to improve coastal resilience in the region over a range of future conditions.
- Ensure funding for federal forecasting and modeling for lake level variability, extreme storm events, precipitation, and flooding acknowledge and study the unique impacts on the Great Lakes basin.

## Fully fund the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to maintain progress in restoring North America's greatest freshwater resource

- Appropriate no less than \$400 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) in FY 2023, as authorized by the *Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2019*, to continue environmental cleanups, reduce nutrient pollution that causes toxic algae blooms, and protect the Great Lakes from invasive carp and other aquatic invasive species. **These funds should be in addition to the supplemental \$200 million for FY 2023 included in the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)*.**
- Continue support for successful collaborative efforts under the GLRI that facilitate information-sharing and coordinate regional activities, such as the Great Lakes Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Collaborative, Invasive Mussel Collaborative, and Great Lakes *Phragmites* Collaborative.

## Invest in approaches that will stop the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species

- Authorize the Brandon Road Project at full federal expense, including construction, operation, maintenance, rehabilitation, replacement, and non-structural measures, to help prevent the movement of invasive carp and other aquatic invasive species (AIS) from the Mississippi River basin into the Great Lakes, recognizing its national significance in protecting the economy and ecosystems for future generations.
- Direct the Army Corps of Engineers to complete the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study to prevent AIS transfer between the Mississippi River and Great Lakes watersheds.
- Provide funding for successful programs including: the Great Lakes and other regional AIS panels and state AIS management plans established under the National Invasive Species Act; the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's sea lamprey control program; and the Invasive Carp Action Plan.

## Strengthen the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River navigation system to support safe, efficient and cost-effective movement of goods

- Fully appropriate funds from the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, including dedicated funding for the Great Lakes Navigation System, to support dredging and maintenance of Great Lakes harbors, channels, and navigation infrastructure.
- Ensure appropriated funds included in IIJA for the Maritime Administration's Port Infrastructure Development Program are allocated to port facilities in the Great Lakes.
- Provide funding for construction of a new heavy icebreaker for the Great Lakes and maintenance of existing icebreaking vessels to ensure the Coast Guard is able to remove ice jams and maintain federal navigation channels in the Great Lakes.
- Instruct the U.S. Coast Guard to update its performance metrics for Great Lakes icebreaking to ensure long-term safety and viability of shipping on the Great Lakes Navigation System.
- Provide funding, pursuant to the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act, to assist in development of ballast water treatment technology that can be implemented by the Great Lakes fleet.
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection should support global supply chains by facilitating movement of cargo and passengers on the U.S./Canada border, including timely clearance of containerized cargo in Great Lakes ports.



## Strengthen agricultural and other conservation programs to protect water quality, reduce nutrient pollution, enhance wildlife habitat and bolster the economy

- Increase funding for programs to reduce point and nonpoint source nutrient discharges, improve agricultural practices, limit erosion by fostering naturalized stream-flood stability, install green infrastructure practices, and protect, enhance, and restore wetlands and flood plains.
- Fund targeted research, development, and monitoring focused on: the role of changing climate conditions on bloom dynamics and nutrient loading; formation and transport of bioavailable particulate and soluble phosphorus; the role of nitrogen in contributing to blooms and their toxicity; remote sensing and monitoring systems for prediction and early warning capability; human health impacts of HABs; emerging treatment technologies; the role of invasive zebra and quagga mussels in promoting growth of harmful and nuisance algal blooms; and the role of agricultural best management practices to reduce nutrient loss.
- Expand funding and technical support to implement existing commitments and agreements related to Lake Erie, and increase support across the Great Lakes basin to implement state-specific plans addressing the persistence of harmful and nuisance algal blooms and hypoxia occurring throughout the Great Lakes region.



Great blue heron on Lake Erie in Erie, Pennsylvania

## Upgrade infrastructure to ensure equitable access to clean and safe water

- Prioritize projects funded by the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund that improve water quality in historically underrepresented areas.
- Support the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Program and reforms to increase private sector investment in water infrastructure and new clean water technologies.
- Implement U.S. EPA's PFAS Action Plan, establish a federal drinking water standard for PFAS, and support efforts to improve monitoring, detection, and coordination between state and federal agencies to clean up PFAS pollution from former military bases and other sources.

## Support coordinated regional science and data collection to improve planning and evidence-based decision-making

- Fund cross-cutting planning efforts to coordinate and develop regional science and data collection in the Great Lakes, including the International Joint Commission decadal science plan and the US Geological Survey science plan.
- Ensure science funding included in IIJA is adequately allocated in the Great Lakes region to support Great Lakes science and data gathering, regional observing systems, and recapitalization of science vessels.
- Fund specific research to better understand and target reductions and remediation of the highest risk sources and forms of mercury contamination, and how climate stressors may impact mercury pollution and exposure in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River region, including mercury concentrations in fish and shellfish, amount of harvest, and human consumption.







Au Sable Light Station on Lake Superior in Burt Township, Michigan

## Fund the GLC to fulfill its unique role in the region

Provide \$3 million to the Great Lakes Commission (GLC) in FY 2023 to ensure it has adequate resources and capacity to fulfill its unique role in the region, including:

- Ensuring states and the federal government are coordinated and communicating on the implementation of important federal and regional programs, including recent significant programmatic investments made under the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)*.
- Identifying regional priorities related to infrastructure and climate resiliency and coordinating actions to address identified priorities.
- Tracking the region's progress toward shared goals for the Great Lakes and proactively engaging in planning and identifying areas of opportunity for congressional and federal agency action.

### Regional role of the GLC

The Great Lakes Basin Compact confers specific powers to the Great Lakes Commission that benefit the states and the federal government, including the power to “collect, correlate, interpret, and report on data;” “recommend policies... uniform or other laws, ordinances, or regulations relating to...water resources;” and “cooperate with the governments of the United States and of Canada.”

This capacity is unique to the GLC: there are no other agencies or organizations in the region that have the authority in state and federal law to convene, make recommendations, and represent the states on Great Lakes water resource issues.

### How dedicated funding will benefit the region

The GLC believes long-term planning capacity and policy expertise will help to better achieve regional goals related to water quality, climate resilience, and environmental restoration. As the GLC also increases its focus on equity and environmental justice, achieving these goals will provide significant community benefits throughout the Great Lakes region.

Because the GLC fosters collaborative action among the Great Lakes states and works closely with a variety of federal agencies, it serves as a focal point to help the states and federal agencies to work together towards common goals. As examples, the GLC is working with the Army Corps of Engineers and the states on the Brandon Road invasive species barrier, the Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study, the Soo Locks, and has assisted EPA and the Coast Guard with the implementation of VIDA standards.

The GLC is uniquely positioned to enhance regional data collection and reporting in a variety of areas, which would help policymakers at the federal and state levels track progress and craft new ideas to meet existing needs.

**About the Great Lakes Commission** The Great Lakes Commission is a binational government agency established in 1955 to protect the Great Lakes and the economies and ecosystems they support. Its membership includes leaders from the eight U.S. states and two Canadian provinces in the Great Lakes basin. The GLC recommends policies and practices to balance the use, development, and conservation of the water resources of the Great Lakes and brings the region together to work on issues that no single community, state, province, or nation can tackle alone.



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