

# **GREAT LAKES COMMISSION POLICY POSITIONS**

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*A compendium of policy positions adopted by the member states of the Great Lakes Commission to guide and promote the informed use, development and protection of the world's greatest freshwater resource.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The Great Lakes Commission (Commission) was established in 1955 through the adoption of the Great Lakes Basin Compact by the states bordering the Great Lakes. On behalf of its eight member states and two associate member provinces, the Commission carries out policy research, advocacy, coordination, and communication functions promoting the “orderly, efficient, and balanced development, use and conservation” of the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River system. The Commission is the primary forum for its member jurisdictions to develop collaborative policy approaches regarding the environmental, economic, and societal aspects of the Great Lakes basin.

This compendium serves as a record and reference of the current policy positions of the Commission. It is intended to be a reference point for Commissioners and staff to guide their research, advocacy, coordination, and communication activities, and for Observers and constituents of the member jurisdictions on the Commission’s policy stances. While the positions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions of any specific member jurisdiction, they are established by the joint action of the Commission membership through the means specified in the Great Lakes Basin Compact. These policy positions are not static, but rather evolve with the emergence and changing emphases of various issue areas and the consensus opinions of the Commission membership.

Policy positions are established and altered by the Commission in several ways. Most frequently, the membership or the Commission’s Board of Directors may approve resolutions or policy statements by majority vote. In addition, the Commission may endorse reports, recommendations, or similar documents prepared by its staff or other groups. Without endorsement by a formal action of the Board of Directors, publications by the Commission are not statements of policy. Correspondence of the Commission may establish its policy on a given issue when signed by the current Chairperson of the Board of Directors. Changes to this policy positions compendium are made by Commission staff on a frequent basis to reflect ongoing actions, endorsements, and correspondence of the Commission.

# **WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

### **Issue Overview**

Under Article I of the Great Lakes Basin Compact, the Great Lakes Commission is responsible for advancing the informed use, development, and conservation of Great Lakes basin and St. Lawrence River water resources. The Commission has had a long standing interest in water resources management and has been a consistent advocate of state and provincial sovereignty to manage the basin's water resources. The Commission has also endorsed the role of the federal government in water resources management projects of national significance in the basin.

The Commission and its partners have pursued, with the financial support from the Great Lakes Protection Fund and in consultation with the Council of Great Lakes Governors, an assessment of the status of data and information on water resources, water use, and related ecological impacts that can be used in developing a Water Resources Management Decision Support System (WRMDSS). The Commission has released a report documenting the results of this effort, including an evaluation of applicable data sets, a characterization of the hydrologic system, an assessment of ecological impacts and the identification of models, literature, and research with application to a WRMDSS. This report provides a series of findings and recommendations to help ensure that regional water resources management, planning, and decision-making are conducted on a scientifically sound basis. The recommendations of the WRMDSS report continue to inform water resources decision-making in the Great Lakes -St. Lawrence River basin and provide valuable information to inform the development of a Water Resources Management Decision Support System.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports the WRMDSS report and recognizes the need to implement its findings and recommendations. The Commission's member states and provinces will seriously consider all report findings and recommendations in the interest of advancing regional water resources management decision-making.

The Commission will work closely with its member states and provinces and the Council of Great Lakes Governors to pursue the necessary partnerships, financial support and other assistance to build upon the progress to date and move forward a decision support system that ensures the best available information.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (April 2003): *Endorsement of the Report on Decision Support for Water Resources Management*

[Resolution](#) (October 2002): *Decision Support for Water Resources Management*

Resolution (March-April 1998): *Implementation of Levels Reference Study Recommendations*

Resolution (October 1983)

Resolution (May 1982)

### **Related Positions**

[Sustainable Water Use](#)

### **Issue Overview**

The surface and groundwater resources of the Great Lakes basin are the source of drinking water for approximately 40 million people. Events in recent years have highlighted the need to ensure that domestic infrastructure critical to human health and well-being is secure. Policies and programs at the national, regional, and local level have increasingly focused on protecting critical water supply and treatment infrastructure. The protection of public water drinking supplies has been identified as a key priority in domestic security strategies. Planning and preparedness for homeland security also benefit overall environmental protection and economic well being. New procedures since the 2001 U.S. terrorist attacks focus on maintaining security zones at selected power plants, municipal water intakes and filtration plants, and sensitive infrastructure. Article I of the Great Lakes Basin Compact mandates a specific role for the Great Lakes Commission in the protection of the basin's water resources and supply.

On July 1, 2003, the U.S. Coast Guard published a set of interim rules establishing security requirements for the entire U.S. maritime industry, including port facilities (33 CFR 105). Included in the requirements are a number of measures appropriate for coastal ports with heavy traffic in high risk trades, including containerized cargo. These requirements are onerous and prohibitively expensive for Great Lakes ports devoted almost exclusively to non-hazardous, low risk, dry bulk commodities. Because of their low risk status, Great Lakes ports have fared very poorly in receiving federal port security grant funds. Despite a lack of success in obtaining TSA grants, Great Lakes ports are still obligated to meet the full federal security requirements. This issue has serious economic implications for U.S. Great Lakes ports because the added cost to implement the U.S. security requirements could make some ports and dock operators uncompetitive with foreign suppliers in high volume, bulk commodities with extreme price sensitivity (e.g., iron ore).

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission is in support of equitable attention to the Great Lakes region through federal homeland security initiatives, such as port security. The Commission will assist efforts to integrate homeland security policies, procedures, and resources in pursuing regional environmental protection and economic sustainable goals. The Commission supports a more equitable approach in development of port security requirements and awarding federal marine security grants, acknowledging the unique nature of Great Lakes ports, including the commodities they handle and the ways they are operated. The Commission takes the position that federal marine security grant funds should not be risk-based if federal security regulatory requirements are not.

The Commission supports providing representation from the Commission, its member states, and appropriate water utility/industry associations on U.S. EPA's Water Security Working Group, as well as other national bodies and forums, addressing the security of public drinking water supplies and associated water resources infrastructure. The Commission will work in partnership with relevant federal, state/provincial and local agencies, utilities and other stakeholders to advance policies and programs to protect drinking water supplies and safeguard water resources infrastructure in the Great Lakes basin. The Great Lakes states, in consultation with Ontario, Québec, and the two federal governments, should continue cooperative planning regarding maritime and related homeland security issues pertaining to the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River system.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (May 2004): *Protecting Drinking Water Security in the Great Lakes Basin*

[Resolution](#) (October 2003): *Support for the Fair Distribution of Port Security Funds in the Great Lakes*

[Resolution](#) (April 2003): *Homeland Security and the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River System*

### **Related Positions**

[U.S./Canada Border Crossings](#)

### **Issue Overview**

The Great Lakes are a unique and critical environmental and economic resource to be used, developed and protected by the United States and Canada. Despite its vastness, the resource is a fragile one, demanding continued and strengthened management to avoid past abuse and neglect that has led to degraded water quality in many areas, as well as impairment of valuable beneficial uses. It is important for pollution prevention activities to be pursued at the state and sub-state level. The Great Lakes states are actively engaged in voluntary pollution prevention efforts, forming many partnerships with businesses, industries, municipalities and communities. Increasingly, non-point sources of pollution are being recognized as a major contributor of toxic and conventional pollutants entering the Great Lakes. The extent of the toxic contaminant problems in the Great Lakes has raised water quality management efforts to a new level of complexity, as the pollutants themselves are numerous, their effects not well understood, and the sources widely dispersed and not readily controlled.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission feels that new legislative initiatives and related programs (at the federal level) should not be initiated without providing the funding, guidance, and oversight needed to adequately implement them. State implementation of existing, required federal programs should not be mandated until necessary federal guidance and funding is in place. Any federal regulatory program to control nonpoint sources of pollution must be flexible enough to accommodate water quality-based approaches established by the states.

The Commission supports a comprehensive, basin-wide program to address the problem of contaminated sediments in many Great Lakes harbors and Areas of Concern (as designated under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement). Such a program, appropriately implemented at the federal level, should provide funding, technical assistance, and policy guidance. It should build upon existing programs and activities administered by the U.S. EPA, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and other appropriate entities.

The Commission supports passing federal legislation to increase wetlands protection through the development of inventories as management tools, and by making funding available for increased state and federal wetlands acquisition and improved planning and management.

### **Policy Reference**

Commission Action (April 1998)  
Commission Summary Position Statement (adopted March 1994)  
Commission Summary Position Statement (adopted October 1987)  
Resolution (March 1987)  
Resolution (October 1983)

### **Related Positions**

[Areas of Concern](#)  
[Clean Water Act Reauthorization](#)



### **Issue Overview**

The federal Clean Water Act (CWA) as a cornerstone of a federal/state partnership that has yielded notable progress in Great Lakes water quality improvement. Reauthorization of this landmark legislation offers an excellent opportunity to build upon past progress and introduce a new era in intergovernmental partnership.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports extensive state input and involvement in any reauthorization of the CWA as vital to prevent backward steps in the development of the federal/state partnership. Federal authority must recognize and build upon existing successful state programs, and not limit the state-by-state flexibility needed to address legislative goals in the most efficient and cost effective manner possible. Any CWA reauthorization must foster intergovernmental partnerships, and, in particular, recognize the increasingly important role of the states in that partnership.

Reauthorization language for the CWA should:

- Include clear national mandates that reflect the high standards already in place by Great Lakes states;
- Provide a mechanism to bring states up to those high standards;
- Not be overly prescriptive and rigid in establishing management measures, particularly as they relate to nonpoint source pollution control (including coastal);
- Encourage state flexibility, both in maintaining existing innovative programs and in developing new ones;
- Not penalize states with programs that exceed the requirements of current federal mandates or otherwise provide a disincentive for their efforts;
- Substantially expand federal funding and assistance to allow state agencies to fully implement the CWA nonpoint source provisions (including coastal);
- Revise the Section 404 program to
  - eliminate duplicate regulations;
  - remove non-required administrative regulations that delay decision making;
  - simplify state assumption of the program; and
  - increase the use of nationwide or general permits for projects that would have minimal impacts, or which already require permits by states.
- Include a waiver provision (under certain conditions) for NPDES permits;
- Include a State Revolving Fund (SRF) allocation formula that recognizes the level of effort made by individual states which devote considerable state resources to this problem; and
- Include a substantial increase in federal appropriations for the SRF if program objectives are to be met and a goal of a self-sustaining SRF is to be realized. Any expansion of SRF eligibilities should be accompanied by a commensurate increase in funding. Funding must be sufficient to address priority municipal waste treatment needs identified by the Great Lakes states.

### **Policy Reference**

Commission Action (April 1998)  
Commission Summary Position Statement (adopted March 1994)  
Resolution (October 1983)

### **Related Positions**

[Federal Water Quality Assistance](#)

### **Issue Overview**

The U.S.-Canada Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement of 1972 (amended in 1978 and 1987) provides a binational framework to “restore and enhance water quality in the Great Lakes Basin ecosystem.” Annex II of the Agreement provides for the development and implementation of Lakewide Management Plans (LaMPs), with the goal of improving ecosystem health in each of the Great Lakes through the elimination of critical pollutants. Delays associated with the development and implementation of the LaMPs is a matter of concern to all parties, and unless addressed, will compromise progress in achieving the Agreement’s objectives. Successful implementation of the Agreement and its various annexes is fundamentally dependent upon strong federal/state/provincial partnerships. A review of progress under the Agreement, as required in Article X, is currently underway by the two federal governments in consultation with states, provinces, and tribal authorities via the Binational Executive Committee.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports full implementation of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement through federal participation and assistance in funding at a level sufficient to carry out Agreement provisions. The Commission supports the completion of LaMPs for Lakes Superior, Michigan, Erie and Ontario by the U.S. and Canadian federal governments under the Four Party Agreement. The Commission also supports the release of a revised Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and encourages its eight member states to participate, as resources permit, in the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and LaMP review and revision process.

The Commission supports the involvement of the Great Lakes states in any activities involving an examination of the implementation of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and must be involved in any and all future review and renegotiation efforts relative to the Agreement, its terms of reference, and its Annexes. Specifically, the Great Lakes states must be fully involved with the U.S. team as follows:

- In the pre-decision process, the Great Lakes states must be consulted when any decision to amend or otherwise renegotiate is being made.
- If a decision to seek amendment or renegotiation is reached, the Great Lakes states must be involved in any announcements of the selected renegotiation issues and be full participants in any preparatory discussions involving Canada and its provinces.
- In any negotiation process, the Great Lakes states must: (1) be involved with any public and/or private work groups and participate in any decisions (especially regarding compromise from pre-negotiation targets); (2) be present as technical advisors to the United States negotiation team in discussions with the Canadian negotiation team; and (3) be supported at a level sufficient to carry out Agreement provisions.

### **Policy Reference**

Resolution (September 1999): *Great Lakes State Involvement in Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement Review and Lakewide Management Plan Revision*  
Commission Summary Position Statement (adopted March 1994)

### **Related Positions**

[Watershed Management & Planning](#)

### **Issue Overview**

The principle of informed use, management, and protection of Great Lakes water resources is fundamental to the mandate of the Great Lakes Commission under the Great Lakes Basin Compact. Issues associated with water withdrawal, consumption, diversion, and export have highlighted the potential vulnerability of the resource to uses that are fundamentally unsuitable and damaging to the ecological integrity and economic health of the region and its residents. Heightened interest in such issues has prompted regional investigations and recommendations which influence Commission policy and include:

- Great Lakes Charter (1985)
- Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) Section 1109 (1986)
- Great Lakes Water Use Database (1989)
- IJC Water Levels Reference Study (1993)
- Nova Group Water Export Proposal (1998)
- Great Lakes Governors' Statement of Principles to Protect Great Lakes Water Resources (1999)
- IJC Reference Study on Water Export, Diversions and Consumptive Use (2000)
- Great Lakes Charter Annex (2001)
- Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Sustainable Water Resources Agreement and Compact (2005)

Since the signing of the Great Lakes Charter, the Commission has consistently communicated that the primary stewardship responsibility for water management resides with the states and provinces. In December 2005 the Great Lakes Governors and Premiers signed the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Sustainable Water Resources Agreement and its companion Compact to ensure the sustainable use and management of the basin's water resources. The initiatives recognize that future diversions, withdrawals and consumptive uses have the potential to significantly impact the region's environment, economy, and welfare. They enable the states and provinces to protect, conserve, restore, improve and effectively manage the waters and associated resources of the region in a durable and efficient way, retaining state and provincial management authority. An emerging issue for the region is the linkage between energy and water. Ensuring clean safe water requires large amounts of energy to supply, purify, distribute, and treat water and wastewater. Conversely, supplying energy requires large amounts of water and impacts water quality, quantity and water-dependent natural resources. Energy and water planning are currently done separately, compromising the region's ability to effectively evaluate and plan for future water and energy needs.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports a comprehensive water management program that is designed and implemented on a basin-wide level to ensure that all policy decisions relating to water levels, flows, diversions and uses are informed ones. The Commission supports implementation of the provisions of the Great Lakes Charter, Charter Annex, the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Sustainable Water Resources Agreement and its companion Compact. The effective use, management and protection of Great Lakes basin water resources is a shared responsibility, with states and provinces as primary stewards. The Commission supports full and open consultation and communication among affected jurisdictions. The Commission supports efforts to develop the programmatic, information, scientific and legislative tools necessary to help protect the basin ecosystem. The Commission is committed to managing and maintaining the Great Lakes Regional Water Use Database and offers its services to meet evolving needs in the areas of water use, science, conservation and sustainable management.

The Commission supports the establishment of new protocols and management models that engage water resources management and energy generation in consultative planning processes. The Commission encourages consultation with state and provincial water resource planning agencies to evaluate and make recommendations concerning water use by the energy sector to achieve water efficiencies and conservation objectives as envisioned by the Sustainable Water Resources Agreement and Compact. The Commission calls on federal agencies to collaborate with each other and consult with the Great Lakes states and provinces concerning energy and water policies.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (September 2009): *The Water Energy-Nexus: Linking Water and Energy Planning in the Great Lakes*  
[Resolution](#) (October 2008): *Support for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact*  
[Resolution](#) (October 2006): *Support for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Sustainable Water Resource Agreement and Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact*  
[Resolution](#) (May 2000): *Water Withdrawal, Consumption, Diversion and Export*  
[Resolution](#) (September 1999): *Great Lakes Water Diversion, Consumptive Use, and Export*  
[Resolution](#) (October 1998): *Water Quantity Management in the Great Lakes Basin*  
[Resolution](#) (September 1995): *Review and Evaluation of Progress under the 1985 Great Lakes Charter*  
[Policy Statement](#) (November 1989): *Drought Management and Great Lakes Water Levels*  
[Resolution](#) (March 1986)

### **Related Positions**

[Water Resources Management](#)  
[Energy](#)

### **Issue Overview**

Fluctuating water levels are a reality in the Great Lakes--St. Lawrence system and occur on short-term, seasonal, and long-term bases. An understanding of these fluctuations, and the status of water levels at any given time, is of overriding interest to commercial and recreational vessel operators, resource managers, scientists, and public officials. Since 2000, the upper Great Lakes (Superior, Michigan and Huron) have been undergoing significantly low water levels. Lake Superior established new record lows and water levels on Lakes Michigan-Huron could reach new lows if drought conditions persist and snowfall and ice cover remain below average. There are also increasing concerns that outflows from Lake Huron through the St. Clair River have increased as a direct consequence of channel enlargements since 1970. The International Joint Commission (IJC) has initiated an Upper Great Lakes Study to investigate factors affecting water levels and flows on the Lakes, including physical processes affecting Lake Huron outflows through the St. Clair River. An interim report is expected in 2009.

The Great Lakes Water Level Observation Network, comprised of 49 stations has, until recently, been largely neglected due to inadequate federal funding for maintenance. Stable funding over the long-term is needed to complete planned network repairs and upgrades and to assure the continued real-time delivery of reliable, high quality data. The Hydrographic Services Improvement Act of 1998 established a federal framework to implement new technologies and modernize programs, including water level gauge stations in the Great Lakes basin.

Significant groundwater research is also needed to enhance and support sound water resources decision-making, given the complex dynamics of groundwater recharge, flow, and discharge that impact both water quantity and quality. Ongoing work examining the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River bihydrological information base indicate that substantial improvements are needed in aquifer mapping, monitoring of groundwater resources, and evaluations of groundwater demand. Declining financial resources has diminished the groundwater monitoring network, a primarily U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) responsibility, to below the minimum functional level that is needed to support regional decision-making.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports U.S. and Canadian funding to fully investigate the causes of water level decline in Lakes Michigan and Huron, including detailed geophysical surveys at the head of the St. Clair River to determine erosion potential into the future. Further, the Commission supports funding for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in close consultation with Environment Canada and the IJC, to evaluate options for compensation for past changes in the St. Clair River. Any eventual decision to implement any structural or engineering compensation options should occur only after reaching consensus among effect states and provinces, working in coordination with the IJC and with benefit of rigorous scientific and economic evaluation.

The Commission supports increased federal funding for the USGS to maintain and expand the groundwater monitoring network, as well as annual funding for the maintenance and enhancement of the Great Lakes Water Level Observation Network. The Commission urges that groundwater data and information be consolidated for ready access in an integrated, basin-wide network to support management of Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River water resources. The Commission also encourages U. S. federal agencies and Great Lakes states to work with their Canadian counterparts to develop a better understanding of direct and indirect groundwater flow to the Great Lakes, and the tributary rivers and streams in support of the 2001 Great Lakes Charter Annex.

The Commission endorses the IJC Lake Levels Reference Study (1993), which provides resource management officials, shoreline communities, and residents with guidance and recommendations for addressing future lake level fluctuations.

### **Policy Reference**

[Commission Action](#) (June 2008): Letter to the Great Lakes Congressional Task Force Co-Chairs  
[Resolution](#) (October 2007): *Lake Huron Outflows through the St. Clair River*  
[Resolution](#) (May 2004): *Enhanced Groundwater Monitoring and Research to Inform Management Directions*  
[Resolution](#) (October 2003): *Maintaining and Enhancing the Great Lakes Water Level Observation Network*  
Commission Action (September 1990)  
Policy Statement (November 1989): *Drought Management and Great Lakes Water Levels*  
Resolution (October 1987)

### **Related Positions**

[Sustainable Water Use](#)  
[Drought Management](#)  
[Lake St. Clair](#)  
[Coastal Wetland Management](#)

### **Issue Overview**

Although the Great Lakes region is one of the most water-rich areas in the world, drought conditions in the late 1980s demonstrated the unpredictability of meteorological events, and the attendant (and often pronounced) economic, environmental, and social impacts. The fact that the mid-1980s were characterized by above-average precipitation and historically high water levels on four of the five Great Lakes underlines such unpredictability. Historically, efforts to anticipate and plan for drought in the basin have been limited in scope and frequency, with attention driven largely by response to crisis conditions. Unanticipated expenditures for such crisis management activities by state, provincial, and local governments can cripple budgets and seriously restrict funding for other important government programs.

In 1989, the Great Lakes Commission formed a Task Force on Drought Management and Great Lakes Water Levels to accomplish several tasks, including development of a regional policy statement with findings and recommendations on drought planning and management. The regional policy statement was approved by the Commission in 1989. In addition, many drought and water level-related findings and policy positions are being implemented through the work of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Water Management Regional Body coordinated by the Council of Great Lakes Governors. The Regional Body was created through the Great Lakes—St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement. The Agreement details how the Great Lakes States, Ontario and Québec will manage and protect the Basin and provide a framework for each State and Province to enact laws for its protection. The Governors and Premiers are working aggressively to put the Agreement into action.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission has endorsed the series of recommendations put forth by the Drought Management and Great Lakes Water Levels Task Force in the areas of drought planning; data gathering and dissemination; monitoring and evaluation; and intermediate and long-term planning. The entire list of recommendations endorsed by the Commission can be found online at: [http://www.glc.org/policy/documents/GLC\\_Policy\\_Statement\\_on\\_Drought\\_Management\\_1989.pdf](http://www.glc.org/policy/documents/GLC_Policy_Statement_on_Drought_Management_1989.pdf).

### **Policy Reference**

Policy Statement (November 1989): *Drought Management and Great Lakes Water Levels*

### **Related Positions**

[Lake Levels & Flows](#)

### **Issue Overview**

In February 1998, the U.S. released a Clean Water Action Plan that “provides a blueprint for restoring and protecting the nation’s precious water resources.” This multi-agency initiative presents a series of action recommendations in the areas of human health, natural resources stewardship, polluted runoff controls, and public information. Clean Water Action Plan implementation calls for a watershed management approach that features intergovernmental partnerships. All plan components – including ongoing, enhanced, and new programs – will have an impact on Great Lakes water quality and resource management in general. The successful formulation and implementation of these programs will require a strong federal/state partnership and the support and involvement of watershed-based interstate organizations.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports watershed management and planning on the basis of hydrologic boundaries, as it will enhance creative local partnerships and funding opportunities and ensure that pollution control measures are efficiently and effectively targeted. Approval of individual watershed management plans should be a state responsibility. Plan approval in larger watersheds should involve multiple states and multiple jurisdictions, where appropriate. U.S. EPA review and comment is appropriate, and adequate federal funding for watershed planning will be essential.

The member states of the Great Lakes Commission support the intent of the Clean Water Action Plan and recognize its potential for a watershed-oriented approach to water quality improvement and protection. The Commission’s member states make the following recommendations for Clean Water Action Plan (Plan) implementation:

- Interstate river basin organizations – such as the Great Lakes Commission – must play a key role in the implementation (e.g., Unified Watershed Assessment process), given their ability to deliver programs and services at the watershed level on an efficient and cost-effective basis.
- The federal government must recognize the states as primary stewards of the resource and use the Plan as a framework for a partnership that showcases and enhances – rather than replaces – ongoing state and interstate initiatives.
- Given that the majority of the Plan’s 111 actions are directed at activities with a lead role for one or more federal agencies, a mechanism for ongoing consultation with the states, again using interstate river basin organizations where appropriate, should be established and maintained.
- The Plan’s 111 actions should be prioritized, in consultation with the states, to ensure that the implementation process is directed at key problem areas and maximizes use of available financial resources.
- The Plan budget, as proposed by the Administration and adopted by Congress, must ensure that all ongoing and new mandates with implications for states and interstate organizations are adequately funded, and financial and technical assistance to all relevant partners is provided.

The federal government – through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of Agriculture – should convene a meeting to address Plan implementation in the Great Lakes Basin, and identify specific roles, responsibilities and opportunities for the Great Lakes Commission, its member states, and other agencies and organizations in the Great Lakes Basin. The U.S. federal government must recognize the binational character of the Great Lakes and ensure that Plan implementation is coordinated with all relevant Canadian federal and provincial initiatives, as well as with programs under the U.S.-Canada Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

### **References**

Resolution (October 1998): *Clean Water Action Plan Implementation*  
Commission Summary Position Statement (adopted March 1994)

### **Related Positions**

[Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement](#)

### **Issue Overview**

The Midwest Flood of 1993 had devastating impacts in a number of Great Lakes states in terms of loss of life and the destruction of communities, public infrastructure, and ecologically significant resources. Financial loss was pervasive in all sectors of the economy affected directly by the flood and its collateral impacts. Following the flood, the Interagency Floodplain Management Review Committee of the Administrative Floodplain Management Task Force issued a report with recommendations on improving existing floodplain and watershed management programs. The recommendations called for new federal legislation; revision of existing principles and guidelines for water project evaluation; enhancement of coordination for project development; non-federal cost-share policies; enhanced flood prevention and disaster response efforts; revision of the National Flood Insurance Program; activation of the U.S. Water Resources Council; and the reestablishment of river basin commissions. The lessons learned from the Midwest Flood of 1993 can and should influence floodplain management policies and programs in other regions and nationally.

The Committee report was based on four underlying ideas: (1) that all levels of government, as well as the private sector and citizen interests, have a stake in floodplain management; (2) that all who support risky behavior, either directly or indirectly, should share in floodplain management and associated costs; (3) that state and local governments have primary management responsibility, with federal agency leadership and support; and (4) that individual citizens must adjust their actions to the risks they face and bear a greater share of the economic costs.

There is a need for enhanced federal agency coordination in floodplain management and associated development and implementation of basin-oriented approaches on a national basis. Since dissolution of the federal Water Resources Planning Act, the U.S. Water Resources Council and associated system of river basin commissions in 1981, drastic changes have taken place in terms of institutional arrangements, federal/state relations, legislation, policy, and financial responsibilities. Reinstating these institutional arrangements should proceed only with significant modifications, and only with the full support of the affected states

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission endorses the intent of the Interagency Floodplain Management Review Committee (Committee) report and the development of a national floodplain management strategy. The Commission supports the Committee's call for a floodplain management strategy that involves, sequentially, "avoiding inappropriate use of the floodplain, minimizing vulnerability to damage through both structural and nonstructural means, and mitigating flood damages when they do occur." Any strategy development must provide a broad national focus as well as direct adequate attention and resources to the needs of the Great Lakes Basin. The Commission recognizes complementary aspects between the Committee report and the 1993 International Joint Commission's (IJC) Levels Reference Study Board report and advises that any national or regional floodplain management strategy consider and reflect the IJC report.

The Commission offers the following principles for consideration:

- Any reinstatement of the U.S. Water Resources Council—river basin commission arrangement must accommodate an ecosystem approach to management and must not be limited to floodplain management.
- The establishment of a river basin commission must be initiated, developed, and approved through a mechanism that provides leadership and decision-making authority for the relevant state governments. The structural and operational characteristics of such a commission should be not over-prescribed by the federal government, and the relevant states must retain the flexibility to design an institution that meets the unique needs of their basin.
- The potential for existing institutional arrangements at the interstate level to address basin planning and management needs must be carefully examined before any alternate or additional arrangement is considered. In 1981, the assets of the Great Lakes Basin Commission were transferred to the Great Lakes Commission with the understanding that the latter would assume an enhanced role in Basin planning and management. Any new federal legislation or initiative must recognize that role and work within the Commission's authority (as provided for in P.L. 90-419, the Great Lakes Basin Compact). Any legislative initiative that would compromise that authority or establish a duplicate institutional arrangement is opposed by the Great Lakes Commission.
- The Administrative Floodplain Management Task Force should consult with the Great Lakes states – both individually and collectively – as consideration is given to implementing report recommendations. Great Lakes Commission representation on any subsequent task force or working group is requested.

### **Policy Reference**

Position Statement (October 1994)

### **Related Positions**

### **Issue Overview**

Lake St. Clair lies in the Lake Huron-Lake Erie corridor (HEC) and has suffered from numerous human-related impacts, including nonpoint source pollution, combined and sanitary sewer overflows, beach closures, shoreline modifications, industrial discharges, contaminated sediments, and exotic species introductions. Lake St. Clair has not been formally designated as an Area of Concern (AOC) or provided a Lakewide Management Plan. As a result, it lacks a unified and comprehensive management structure to protect, restore, and enhance the lake and its watershed. The Great Lakes Commission, in collaboration with numerous U.S. and Canadian partners, has engaged in a suite of initiatives to address critical environmental issues and elevate the lake's profile within the broader Great Lakes management framework. These include the St. Clair River and Lake St. Clair Comprehensive Management Plan; Lake St. Clair Monitoring Inventory and Strategic Plan; and the Lake St. Clair Coastal Habitat Project and associated Assessment and Integrated Coastal Management Tool.

The Great Lakes Observing System (GLOS) has coordinated a comprehensive plan with stakeholders in the HEC to develop, calibrate and implement a three-dimensional hydrodynamic model for the HEC that would run on a continuous basis to provide real-time information to public officials. This model would support drinking water protection programs, beach management activities, recreational boating safety and improved forecasting of conveyance for commercial navigation applications. Such an integrated monitoring and modeling plan can be used as a prototype for customized continuous monitoring for other interconnecting waterways such as the St. Mary's River, the Niagara River—Welland Canal system and the St. Lawrence River.

The St. Clair River-Lake St. Clair-Detroit River corridor is another vitally important binational resource shared by the U.S. and Canada. Water resources in this corridor are heavily used for recreational boating, angling, commercial navigation, and many other purposes. Numerous water intakes are located along the corridor from which drinking water is taken for millions of residents in Michigan and Ontario. Binational agreements and protocols are in place between the U.S. and Canada to report hazardous materials spills and to facilitate a coordinated, multi-agency response. Concerns have been raised about the adequacy of these procedures for reporting spills in a timely manner to protect public water.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Environment Canada, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality in their efforts to address Lake St. Clair problems within the existing Four Party Agreement encompassing the Lake Huron to Lake Erie corridor, and the resulting binational Lake St. Clair management initiatives. The Commission urges its member states and provinces, federal agency and tribal authority/First Nations partners to carefully consider products and recommendations from the Lake St. Clair initiatives in the interest of restoring and protecting the Lake's beneficial uses. The Commission urges the U.S. Congress to provide the necessary authority and funding to support implementation of key recommendations.

The Commission supports the development of a comprehensive binational water quality monitoring and surveillance system in the HEC to provide resource managers and the public with accurate and timely data on pollutant levels, contaminant sources, flow conditions, aquatic plant distribution and associated information necessary to protect public health and promote commercial and recreational uses in the corridor. The Commission supports federal funding to develop, test and implement a continuously-operating three-dimensional model for the HEC and strongly encourages U.S. and Canadian federal and state/provincial agencies, local jurisdictions and other partners with management responsibilities for the HEC to engage in and support the planning, testing and implementation of these important tools.

The Commission supports enhanced dialogue among all parties involved in water quality management in the binational St. Clair River-Lake St. Clair-Detroit River corridor to clarify existing mechanisms and procedures for preventing, reporting and responding to hazardous materials spills.

### **Policy Reference**

- [Resolution](#) (May 2006): *Development of Operational Hydrodynamic Models for Great Lakes Interconnecting Waterways*
- [Resolution](#) (October 2002): *Restoration Planning and the Binational Lake St. Clair Watershed*
- [Resolution](#) (May 2001): *Spill Reporting in the Binational St. Clair River-Lake St. Clair-Detroit River Corridor*
- [Resolution](#) (October 2000): *Binational Lake St. Clair Management Initiative*

### **Related Positions**

[Lake Levels & Flows](#)



**Issue Overview**

The Great Lakes Commission recognizes Lake Champlain as an important large lake resource with environmental and economic significance. As with other large freshwater systems in North America and globally, research on the five Great Lakes can benefit – and benefit from – research on Lake Champlain. Lake Champlain is outside the Great Lakes basin, and from a hydrologic and broader scientific standpoint is not considered a Great Lake. Designation as such compromises the decades-old effort to study and manage the five Great Lakes as inter-related components of a single basin. Further, it sets a scientifically untenable precedent that may open the door to designation of other large freshwater lakes that are also outside the Great Lakes Basin and apart from the five interconnected Great Lakes that share a single drainage basin.

**GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission opposes the designation of Lake Champlain as a Great Lake. The Commission believes that efforts to secure additional federal funds for Lake Champlain research should be evaluated on their own merits rather than through legislated redefinition of the lake as a “Great Lake.” The Commission opposes the consideration of Lake Champlain as a “Great Lake” for purposes of the National Sea Grant Program.

**Policy Reference**

Policy Position (March 1998): *Designation of Lake Champlain as a Great Lake*

**Related Positions**

## **ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT**

### **Issue Overview**

Interest in a large scale plan for ecosystem restoration in the Great Lakes basin has heightened significantly in recent years and enjoys broad based support within the community of Great Lakes interests. The Council of Great Lakes Governors has agreed upon ecosystem restoration priorities and has forwarded those priorities to Congress. The Great Lakes Commission has also long supported such an initiative through formal policy actions and resolutions, and has advanced this priority since 2000 with its initial Great Lakes Program to Ensure Environmental and Economic Prosperity. The Commission has an interest in, and responsibility for, the coordination and conduct of basinwide planning as expressed in the Great Lakes Basin Compact, adopted by the eight Great Lakes states with the consent of Congress. The Commission has an ongoing commitment to support, assist and partner with the Great Lakes Governors, the Great Lakes Congressional Delegation, and the larger community of stakeholders in the interests of advancing an ecosystem restoration initiative for the Great Lakes Basin.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports the development of federal legislation that promotes development, planning and implementation of a Great Lakes Basin ecosystem restoration initiative. Such legislation should:

- Explicitly recognize the role of the Great Lakes states as stewards of the resource, and provide for a clear leadership role of the Great Lakes Governors in plan formulation and implementation;
- Include a precise definition of the term "restoration" to ensure that planning elements address the range of programs, projects, activities, research, monitoring and related initiatives that support the reinstatement of beneficial uses of the resource in an environmentally and economically sustainable manner;
- Define the roles of government agencies, private sector interests and non-governmental organizations in collaboration with the leadership of the Great Lakes Governors;
- Involve Canadian provincial and federal agencies, as well as tribal authorities and First Nations, as appropriate, in the planning and implementation process,
- Fully utilize the mandate, legislative authorities, and restoration planning expertise of the Great Lakes Commission and other public multi-jurisdictional entities in plan formulation, implementation, and related decision-making capacities;
- Ensure that the appropriation and allocation of funds is conducted in an orderly, efficient and scientifically sound manner by using restoration priorities and ultimately, a restoration plan as guidance;
- Ensure that funding consideration be given to existing federally authorized programs and projects that are unfunded in the interest of realizing their full potential;
- Avoid unnecessary bureaucracy by fully exploiting the potential of existing agencies and organizations for advisory purposes;
- Build upon the many existing publicly-funded restoration plans and recognize implementation efforts already undertaken at the local, state, federal, binational and basinwide levels;
- Ensure an open and inclusive development process that reflects the views and cultivates the support of stakeholder groups;
- Provide for benchmarking and associated monitoring of all goals, tasks, activities, and broader ecosystem conditions to ensure that progress can be measured over time and adjustments made as needed;
- Provide an overarching set of principles that can provide general guidance for, and consistency among, restoration activities of any scale;
- Provide adequate funds to ensure full state participation in the planning process, a favorable cost-share arrangement to maximize state involvement in implementation, and the flexibility to use multi-jurisdictional agencies (including but not limited to the Great Lakes Commission) as nonfederal sponsors for multi-jurisdictional programs and projects; and
- Ensure an open, inclusive and coordinated approach to the review and update of the Council of Great Lakes Governor's restoration priorities through the convening of the leadership of the Council and the Commission.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (October 2003): *Great Lakes Ecosystem Restoration Planning*

[Resolution](#) (October 2001): *Toward a Great Lakes Restoration Plan*

### **Related Positions**

### **Issue Overview**

The Great Lakes basin has more than 10,000 miles of coastline. While the U.S. federal government has long recognized the unique nature and importance of the Great Lakes, the Lakes' shoreline was not officially designated a "seacoast" until 1970. The problems and opportunities of coastal management in the Great Lakes have received only modest attention at the federal level and in some instances; state and federal programs have operated at cross purposes with each other and with state priorities. Passage of the federal Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) in 1972 required federal actions to be consistent with state coastal management priorities through state participation in the federal Coastal Zone Management Program (CZMP). The CZMP is administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Issues of concern to the Great Lakes states that are addressed by the CZMA include, among others: coastal hazards, nonpoint source pollution, water quality, habitat protection and restoration, waterfront revitalization, public access, prevention and control of aquatic nuisance species, and environmental monitoring/assessment. All Great Lakes States either participate or are in the process of joining the federal Coastal Zone Management Program, which provides matching grants to states to establish and implement state coastal programs. The Coastal Zone programs are the result of an exemplary state-federal partnership that directly benefits the communities and resources of the Great Lakes and provides an institutional mechanism for implementing the goals of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration (GLRC).

Congress has reauthorized the CZMA five times since 1972 and the most recent reauthorization, enacted in 1996 (P.L. 104-150), expired at the end of FY1999. Among the most notable amendments has been the creation of a coastal energy impact assistance program, the addition of new grant programs for states to move beyond basic coastal management efforts, and establishment of a coastal nonpoint water pollution program. In 2008, the Coastal States Organization -- representing the governors of the nation's coastal states, territories, and commonwealths, including all eight of the Great Lakes states -- created a Call for Action in order to communicate a clear and consistent message to the Congress and the next Administration regarding the needs of its member states. Specifically, the Call for Action outlines three significant federal actions: 1) creating a National Ocean and Coastal Trust Fund, 2) supporting regional, state, and local efforts to adapt to climate change, and 3) recrafting and reauthorizing the Coastal Zone Management Act.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports the redrafting and reauthorization of the Coastal Zone Management Act, and recognizes it as one mechanism for national investment in regional, state and local climate change adaptation efforts. The Commission supports a National Ocean and Coastal Trust Fund insofar as the goals of such a fund are consistent with the goals of the GLRC. State coastal programs should be recognized by Congress as one potential institutional and administrative mechanism for implementing the recommendations of the GLRC Strategy. The Commission fully supports the Coastal States Organization's Call for Action as a key policy option for implementing the goals of the GLRC.

The Commission supports appropriation of adequate funds for the Coastal Community Program. The Commission urges its member states to work with regional and local governments to establish and implement the Coastal Community Program to promote revitalization and protection of natural resources and open spaces, as well as efficient, coordinated strategies for implementation in Great Lakes coastal areas.

In implementation of the CZMA, the Commission supports programs and associated regulatory provisions that are not overly prescriptive and rigid in establishing management measures, particularly as they relate to nonpoint source pollution control. State flexibility, both in maintaining existing innovative programs and in developing new ones, should be encouraged. Further, states with programs that exceed the requirements of current federal mandates should not be penalized or otherwise be provided a disincentive for their efforts. Federal funding and assistance must also be substantially expanded to allow state agencies to fully implement the provisions of the CZMA. The Commission supports an ecosystem approach in addressing the challenges posed by management of the Great Lakes coastal zone.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (2009): *Coastal Zone Management Act Reauthorization: An Opportunity to Fund and Implement the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy and Address Climate Change*  
[Resolution](#) (2005): *CZMA Reauthorization and Coastal Community Program*  
Program Committee Action (March 2000)

### **Related Positions**

[Coastal Wetland Management](#)  
[Beach Health](#)  
[Climate Change Adaptation](#)

### **Issue Overview**

Great Lakes coastal wetlands are unique habitats essential to the health and biological diversity of the Great Lakes ecosystem. The natural dynamics of the Great Lakes coastal wetland ecosystem have been altered by lake level regulation, urban and rural development, restoration efforts, and other anthropogenic factors. Great Lakes water levels fluctuate regularly over time, creating larger areas of coastal wetlands and wider beaches with more naturally exposed vegetation during low-level periods. Lower water levels have resulted in increasing pressure by some to alter coastal wetlands through practices involving the mechanized removal of wetland vegetation. Such actions can diminish many valuable functions of Great Lakes coastal wetlands, such as improving water quality by filtering nutrients and sediments, protecting against shoreline erosion during periods of high water, providing breeding and foraging habitat for wildlife, and offering a range of water-based recreational opportunities. Removal of wetlands vegetation can also encourage the spread of exotic and invasive plant species by weakening or destroying native plant communities, and allowing the establishment of invasive plants and other opportunistic species. Development pressures on the Great Lakes coastline have already eliminated or diminished the quality of existing coastal wetland resources.

The ability of the region to assess Great Lakes coastal wetland health is severely compromised by the absence of a comprehensive monitoring program capable of tracking trends over time. In an effort to fill this gap, the Great Lakes Coastal Wetlands Consortium was formed consisting of members of both the scientific and policy communities at federal, state, provincial, and tribal levels. The responsibilities of the Consortium are to select and develop indicators, set priorities for monitoring, develop a binational wetlands data inventory, develop and review a classification system, establish a database for decision support, design and implement a monitoring program utilizing state-of-the-art methodologies, and institutionalize the monitoring plan by securing necessary participants and funds. The success of this regional effort is fundamentally dependent upon the support and involvement of all relevant government jurisdictions and nongovernmental interests.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission promotes the use of sound science in coastal wetlands policy by partnering with federal, state, provincial, and tribal agencies/First Nations in the interest of developing and implementing a sustainable, basinwide monitoring plan for Great Lakes coastal wetlands. The Commission urges its member jurisdictions and interested parties to engage in the development of a coastal wetland monitoring plan to ensure that it is practical, pragmatic, and lends itself to implementation. The Commission supports the enhancement of Great Lakes coastal wetlands monitoring through adequate funding of Clean Water Act programs, federal Great Lakes laboratories, the State of the Lakes Ecosystem Conference, and comprehensive monitoring and mapping programs.

The Commission supports a thorough scientific review of the prospective impacts of laws pertaining to vegetation removal on coastal wetlands ecosystems should be conducted and made available to decision-makers.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (October 2003): *Use of Sound Science in Great Lakes Coastal Wetlands Policy*

[Resolution](#) (May 2001): *Monitoring Plan for Binational Great Lakes Coastal Wetlands*

### **Related Positions**

[Lake Levels & Flows](#)

[Coastal Zone Management](#)

### **Issue Overview**

Hundreds of public beaches in the Great Lakes—St. Lawrence system provide basin residents and visitors to the region opportunities for recreation and water-based leisure activities. These beaches are subject to periodic closure, however, due to pathogens and other contaminants that pose risks to human health. The sources of contamination include point and nonpoint sources such as urban and agricultural runoff, combined sewer overflows, septic system failure, algae die-off, industrial discharges and spill events, and animal waste. Such closures have become increasingly prevalent in recent years, with an average of 17% of beaches reporting being closed or restricted during the beach season from 1981 – 1994, and 48% of those reporting being affected by at least one advisory or closing in 2000.

Water quality advisories at beaches due to bacterial pathogens and toxic contamination, often following storm events, are among the most prevalent human health concerns currently facing the Great Lakes. Persistence and potential growth of indicator bacteria in sediments and soils may have a serious impact on recreational water quality issues. Reporting of water quality advisories is inconsistent among jurisdictions on the Great Lakes, often delayed, and not well publicized, especially to underserved communities. Beach closings resulting from high pathogen loads have a significant negative effect on the region's tourism industry and the health and security of residents. Variations in monitoring and analysis activities and beach closure procedures can result in public uncertainty about water quality problems, and in some instances, increase public health risks, as well as disrupt local economies that benefit from beach-related recreation.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports amending the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (Clean Water Act) to enhance appropriations for grants for water quality monitoring and notification programs through reauthorization of the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health (BEACH) Act. The Commission urges the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to aggressively implement its 1999 "Beach Action Plan" and Congress to target and fund the plan through support of the Clean Water Act Section 319 program, the Wastewater State Revolving Loan Fund, the Great Lakes Areas of Concern program, and the State of the Lakes Ecosystem Conference, among others.

The Commission supports enhanced research and coordinated monitoring of beach water quality and will enhance its ongoing efforts to coordinate data and facilitate public education in this area, through projects such as BeachCast, a centralized data repository of recreational water quality data available via the Internet.

The Commission regards the contamination of recreational waters at Great Lakes-St. Lawrence public beaches as an unacceptable risk to public health and therefore a regional priority, and the Commission urges government jurisdictions in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region, at all levels, to:

- Promote consistency in the development and application of criteria for beach closure decisions;
- Ensure the periodic monitoring of public beaches;
- Provide the public with timely notification of closure decisions;
- Undertake or otherwise advocate research into the causes of contamination events and associated preventive measures; and
- Direct new or existing funds, where possible, to eliminate or otherwise reduce risks to public health as evidenced by beach closure incidents.

The Commission supports, under the terms of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, an International Joint Commission effort to document the extent of the beach water quality problem in the Great Lakes system; better understand the causes; identify actions to improve water quality; and strengthen monitoring, reporting, and public notification processes.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (2005): *Research on Bacterial Pathogens and Reauthorization of the BEACH Act*

[Resolution](#) (2002): *Beach Closures and Associated Water Quality Concerns*

[Resolution](#) (2000): *Beach Closures in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Region*

Commission Action (April 1998)

Resolution (October 1997): *Great Lakes Beach Closures: Water Quality Monitoring and Advisories*

### **Related Positions**

[Coastal Zone Management](#)

[Pollution Prevention](#)

### **Issue Overview**

Due in part to increased public awareness and participation, U.S. federal funding for fish and wildlife management programs in the Great Lakes Basin, although declining in real dollars, has remained relatively stable in recent years. Efforts by organizations such as the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) have increased coordination of U.S. and Canadian resource agencies and helped to restore the Great Lakes commercial and recreational fishery from the devastation of the 1960s to one which has a total annual economic value estimated at \$2 to \$4 billion. Despite significant progress, however, Great Lakes fish and wildlife are still subject to a number of pressures in the ecosystem. Contaminants in the Great Lakes ecosystem accumulate at unacceptable levels in some fish and wildlife, causing serious concern over their effects on human health and fish and wildlife populations. Also, biological pollution resulting from invasions of nonindigenous species threatens the health of Great Lakes fish and wildlife.

Habitat restoration efforts are an important component of achieving fish and wildlife management goals. Certain efforts, however, such as artificial reef construction, need further research by Great Lakes scientific and management communities to determine their effectiveness. More financial support is needed to conduct this research and to implement restoration activities that are proven effective.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports continued federal, state, and provincial efforts to eliminate new aquatic nuisance species (ANS) introductions and to minimize impacts of chemical and biological pollution in order to protect native species and habitat of the region. The Commission encourages stronger communication and cooperation between those entities responsible for ANS prevention and control and the protection of fish and wildlife. The Commission also supports uniformity in identifying chemical contaminants in fish and comparable interpretive programs within the states.

The Commission supports more focused research on habitat restoration methods and their effectiveness in the freshwater environment. Scientific and fisheries research agencies are encouraged to increase restoration research and to share research results to provide management and policy guidance to the Great Lakes states.

The Commission supports artificial reef construction that will provide a clear benefit to fisheries and will not cause deleterious effects on the ecosystem or undue interference with other beneficial uses of the lakes. If construction should occur, materials must be environmentally acceptable and properly placed as to ensure effectiveness and navigational and recreational safety. All constructed reefs should be monitored over time to determine their effectiveness in enhancing fisheries and to assist the Great Lakes states in developing future artificial reef development policies.

The Commission supports broadening funding for wildlife and fishery management with an expanded purpose to address priority identification of best usages, including non-sport species and ecological needs. This includes securing and maintaining adequate funding for the federal Endangered Species Act and Anadromous Fish Conservation Program.

### **Policy Reference**

Program Committee Action (March 2000)  
Program Committee Action (March 1997)  
Commission Action (April 1997)  
Resolutions (May 1991)  
Resolution (April 1990)  
Resolution (November 1988)  
Resolution (March 1985)  
Resolution (June 1978)

### **Related Positions**

[Fish Consumption Advisories](#)  
[Aquatic Invasive Species Management](#)

**Issue Overview**

Fish contaminant data collected and analyzed by federal, state and provincial agencies reveal widespread occurrences of contaminants in sport and commercial fish. Agencies are expanding monitoring programs and data analysis efforts due to concerns regarding the safety of consuming fish caught from the Great Lakes and inland lakes in the region. Related initiatives, following from the 1986 Great Lakes Toxic Substances Control Agreement (signed by the Great Lakes Governors), include efforts to develop a common basinwide protocol on issuing fish consumption advisories. A Uniform Fish Consumption Advisory Task Force, comprised of public health advisors from the eight states, was formally established in 1986 under the Toxic Substances Control Agreement to address consumption of sport fish from the Great Lakes. A draft risk-based advisory protocol (pertaining to fish containing PCBs) was submitted to the Council of Great Lakes Governors in September 1993. The protocol was peer-reviewed by several panels.

**GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports uniform fish consumption guidance pertaining to the entire Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system. Such guidance should include a consistent approach for commercial and sport-caught fish, and should be developed through a process of public review and comment. The Commission recommends that a uniform fish consumption advisory protocol should address other chemicals found in Great Lakes fish, specifically those being addressed by the Great Lakes Binational Toxics Strategy.

**Policy Reference**

Commission Action (October 1996)  
Resolution (April 1990)

**Related Positions**

[Toxic Substances](#)  
[Fish and Wildlife Management](#)



### **Issue Overview**

The introduction of nonindigenous aquatic nuisance species (ANS) presents a significant and growing threat to the economy and environment of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence System. Such species prey upon and displace native animals and plants, reduce biodiversity, limit water use activities and damage public and private infrastructure. More than 180 nonindigenous aquatic species have been introduced into the Great Lakes ecosystem since 1830. Preventing new infestations and limiting the spread of existing invasives is critical to protecting and enhancing the ecological integrity and economic health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence System. Since passage of the federal Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act (NANPCA) in 1990, the Great Lakes Commission has developed policy positions addressing several aspects of this dynamic and complex issue. These positions are described in the following priority areas: ballast water management, comprehensive U.S. federal ANS legislation, Asian carp invasion prevention, the Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species, and information and education for ANS prevention and control.

**Ballast Water Management:** Of the 180 known nonindigenous aquatic species introduced into the Great Lakes ecosystem, approximately one-third of those introductions are attributable to ballast water discharge. The ballast water of commercial vessels traveling in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system, including the unpumpable water and sediment on vessels declaring "no-ballast-on-board" (NOBOB), continues to be a primary vector for new species introductions. Concern over the continuing vulnerability of the Great Lakes to new species introductions via the ballast vector has prompted the recent introduction of more stringent state and federal legislation to address ballast management and the weaknesses of current requirements.

Transfer of harmful ANS and pathogens across the seas and oceans of the world is a global problem requiring global action. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has adopted a new convention to establish global provisions, including a treatment standard, to control and manage ships' ballast water to prevent ANS transport. While the IMO convention reflects significant progress on ANS prevention and control on a global scale, its standards, timeframes and enforcement protocols are not as aggressive as those proposed in U.S. federal legislation.

In an effort to build regional consensus on a viable regulatory approach to ballast water management and ANS prevention, the Great Lakes Commission convened an advisory panel of key regional stakeholders, including industry. The group's charge was to examine the range of concerns surrounding ballast water regulation and to establish a slate of consensus-based objectives that should form the basis for any new legislation. The results of these discussions have informed and contributed to recent Commission positions on ballast water management.

Efforts to develop new ballast treatment technologies to compliment the use of best management practices, state regulations, and development of uniform federal ballast water discharge standards, are also underway. A collaborative effort involving U.S. and Canadian Great Lakes ports, federal agencies, and academic partners has produced the Great Ships Initiative, a \$3.5 million program aimed at the development and implementation of shipboard ballast treatment technology. The Great Ships Initiative is co-managed by the Northeast Midwest Institute and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, with research based at the University of Wisconsin-Superior's Lake Superior Research Institute.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission strongly prefers federal ballast water treatment regulations that would be applied in a uniform and consistent fashion throughout the region, provided that a federal program sufficiently protects the unique economic and ecological interests of the Great Lakes States. The Commission supports interim best management practices (BMPs) for ballast water be adopted by all commercial vessels operating in the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence system to immediately reduce the risk of future invasions while concurrent short and long-term solutions are weighed.

The Commission endorses the following principles to guide any prospective legislation, management, or research activity associated with ballast water management:

- Consistency in legal and policy approaches addressing the ballast vector among Great Lakes jurisdictions.
- Accelerated research to determine the practicability, performance, cost-effectiveness, vessel safety, and environmental health of various technological, biocidal, and management solutions.
- Development and implementation of ballast water control measures that strives for open consultation with the Great Lakes states and provinces, U.S. and Canadian federal governments, and all parties affected by ANS introduction and spread.
- Proposed regulations and technological and biocidal solutions based on the best available science, practicability, performance, cost-effectiveness, and environmental health, and pursued on a regional basis to protect the health of the entire Great Lakes ecosystem.

The Commission supports S. 725 (introduced in the 110th Congress), the National Aquatic Invasive Species Act, as a starting point for a ballast water regulatory program that, when enacted, will meet the needs of the Great Lakes states to protect their economic and environmental interests.

The Commission supports the following provisions that may be included in federal legislation:

- An immediate requirement that all vessels exempted from current regulations (i.e., NOBOB vessels) be required to treat residual ballast water by BMPs such as ballast water exchange or other technology; and
- A ballast water treatment standard regime for ocean-going vessels that includes:
  - The ultimate goal of zero discharge of viable organisms;
  - A requirement to meet an environmentally protective standard within 5 years following enactment, and
  - A requirement to review technology on a periodic basis both before and after the five-year period to define the best performing technology and to require application of discharge standards based on the performance of the best technology.

The Commission objects to the following provisions that may be included in federal legislation:

- Pre-empting states from taking steps to protect against damage by ANS from ballast water;
- Superseding use of any provision of the Clean Water Act with respect to ballast water; and
- Delaying for 10 years or longer the application of treatment standards to NOBOB vessels.

Further, the Commission recommends that federal legislation ensure that contingency planning and activities to control the spread by commercial shipping vessels of any ANS or pathogen introduced in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River can be carried out by the states, in coordination with federal agencies. Federal legislation should clarify the role of federal agencies so that U.S. EPA, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the Departments of Interior and Agriculture work in a coordinated fashion with the states in developing and administering effective ballast water programs. The U.S. EPA should be given the lead authority for defining biologically sound and environmentally effective discharge standards and the U.S. Coast Guard should be given the lead authority for enforcement and for ensuring safe installation and operation of treatment equipment on ships. The U.S. Coast Guard should explore an incentive program for vessel owners and operators and other maritime industry stakeholders to continue research and development on ballast management technologies, notably those effective in NOBOB situations.

The Commission supports implementation of BMPs by all intra-lake and ocean-going commercial shipping vessels to prevent ANS that are introduced into the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River from being spread throughout the system. The Commission supports harmonization of ballast water regulations and treatment standards between the U.S. and Canada and consistent discharge standards among all the Great Lakes states and provinces for oceangoing NOBOB vessels.

The Commission urges the IMO to move forward aggressively to develop and implement additional actions that will complement and expedite domestic policy. The Commission urges the U.S. and Canadian federal governments to use the momentum from the IMO agreement to expedite efforts to develop and implement standards, regulations, and guidelines. The Commission will work with other interested parties in the region to assess how IMO agreement provisions will affect future domestic policy on ballast water in terms of protection from ANS in U.S. waters, with particular attention to the Great Lakes.

To improve and coordinate current technology and management efforts for preventing the introduction of ANS via the ballast water associated with shipping, the Commission encourages its member states to support the Marine Board's 1996 recommendations for controlling introductions of nonindigenous species in ships' ballast water and the binational research strategy of the U.S. and Canadian agencies responsible for controlling ballast water.

The Commission endorses the Great Ships Initiative and offers its full support to efforts to secure adequate funding for its ongoing operations. The Commission recommends that the research and development of shipboard ballast treatment technologies conducted through the Great Ships Initiative be closely coordinated with other efforts to prevent the introduction and spread of ANS in the Great Lakes.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (May 2007): *U.S. Federal Legislation to Protect the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River from Ballast Water Discharges of Invasive Species*

[Resolution](#) (October 2006): *Great Lakes Commission Support for the Great Ships Initiative*

[Resolution](#) (May 2005): *Ballast Water Management for Vessels Declaring No Ballast On Board*

[Resolution](#) (May 2004): *Ballast Water Management Needs in Response to the International Maritime Organization Convention*

[Resolution](#) (May 2001): *Policy Statement on Ballast Water Management: A Product of the Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species*

[Resolution](#) (May 2000): *Ballast Management for the Prevention and Control of Aquatic Nuisance Species*

**Comprehensive U.S. Federal ANS Legislation:** While ballast water from ocean-going commercial vessels is a primary vector for the introduction of ANS to the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system, there is further concern regarding other commercial and recreational activities (e.g., aquaculture, recreational boating, aquarium trade, horticulture) that provide pathways for ANS introduction and spread. A federal comprehensive prevention and control program to address all known pathways of ANS is needed. No U.S. federal legislation addressing this need has been passed since the National Invasive Species Act (NISA) of 1996 reauthorized NANPCA and subsequently expired in 2002. Legislation reauthorizing NISA has been introduced in every session of Congress since 2002. The 2005 version of this legislation, the National Aquatic Invasive Species Act (NAISA), included provisions for the following:

- Ballast water management program;
- Priority pathway management program and screening processes for importation of live aquatic organisms;
- National network for the early detection and monitoring of new aquatic invasive species;

- Rapid response fund to help states take immediate control and eradication measures;
- Full federal support for the ANS dispersal barrier on the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal;
- Multi-agency marine and freshwater research program including ecological and pathway surveys and research to assess rates, patterns and conditions of introductions of ANS; and
- Continued support for regional ANS panels, including the Great Lakes Panel.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission has, since 2005, repeatedly identified the passing and signing into law of comprehensive ANS legislation, such as NAISA, as a top priority. Comprehensive ANS legislation is an overdue federal initiative that is needed to protect U.S. aquatic ecosystems, including the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence ecosystem, from further damage. The Commission supports comprehensive legislation whereby state action is allowed to improve on federal protections related to shipping practices in efforts to protect state waters from ANS. The Commission urges its member jurisdictions to consider those strategic actions that are not currently part of existing state policy and to identify ways and means necessary for their adoption and implementation. The Commission supports strong federal-state partnership and interstate coordination in ANS prevention and control efforts. The Commission supports greater cooperation with the Canadian federal government and Great Lakes provinces to make progress toward the objective of preventing and managing the spread of ANS in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system. The Commission supports a multi-jurisdictional approach that promotes consistency among Great Lakes-St. Lawrence jurisdictions with regard to laws, policies, and programs.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (September 2005): *Support for the National Aquatic Invasive Species Act of 2005*

[Resolution](#) (October 2002): *Reauthorization of the National Invasive Species Act (NISA)*

[Resolution](#) (October 2001): *Reauthorization of the National Invasive Species Act (NISA) of 1996*

**Asian Carp Invasion Prevention:** The prospective invasion of several species of Asian carp (e.g., bighead, black, grass, and silver carp) has been identified as a major threat to the Great Lakes ecosystem. Bighead carp and silver carp were spotted in 2002 within 25 miles of Lake Michigan in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal (CSSC), which connects the Mississippi River and Great Lakes systems. Two significant initiatives are underway to prevent the spread of Asian carp. Construction of an electric ANS dispersal barrier system on the CSSC is an U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) project authorized under NISA (1996). The demonstration barrier, initially meant to be temporary, has been in operation since 2002, must be periodically shut down for maintenance and is in need of significant upgrading to be made permanent. In 2004, USACE, in partnership with the State of Illinois, initiated construction of a permanent barrier approximately 1000 feet from the demonstration barrier. The permanent barrier has a similar electric field, but covers a larger area within the CSSC, has a longer service life, and includes design improvements identified during monitoring and testing of the demonstration barrier. The second barrier will provide greater protection against invasions of ANS, specifically the Asian carp. Authorization and significant funding is needed to upgrade and complete construction on the barrier system. There have also been proposals by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to list species of the Asian carp as “injurious” under the injurious wildlife provision of the Lacey Act (18 U.S.C §42). This listing would prohibit the importation, possession, or shipment of the species in the U.S. It is imperative that aggressive action be taken on these two fronts to safeguard the ecological and economic integrity of the Great Lakes from the threat of Asian carp.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports the USFWS proposal, or action by U.S. Congress, to list the silver carp and largescale silver carp as injurious species under the Lacey Act. The Commission urges the USFWS to finalize a proposal to add the bighead and black carp species to the list of injurious wildlife under the Lacey Act. The Commission encourages its member states to support proposed Lacey Act listings of the silver, largescale silver, bighead and black carp in addition to supporting regulation of these species on a state specific basis. The Commission supports providing authority to USACE to convert the existing temporary barrier into a permanent barrier, complete construction of the second permanent barrier, and operate both barriers at full federal cost. The Commission encourages its member states to promote continued funding to facilitate expedient completion of the barrier.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (October 2006): *Great Lakes Commission Support for Lacey Act Listing of the Silver, Largescale Silver, Bighead and Black Carp As Injurious Species*

[Resolution](#) (May 2004): *Construction and Maintenance of a Permanent Dispersal Barrier in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal*

[Resolution](#) (October 2002): *Addressing the Invasion Threat of Asian Carp*

**Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species:** The Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species (Panel) was convened in 1990 as mandated in NANPCA to coordinate and promote ANS prevention and control efforts within the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence System. This binational group includes state, provincial, federal, and tribal authorities, and private/citizen sector representatives. As called for in NANPCA, the Great Lakes Commission provides staff support to the Panel. Since its inception, the Panel has developed a number of guidance and reference documents to provide a regional policy framework directing collective interjurisdictional action for ANS prevention and to control efforts within Great Lakes-St. Lawrence jurisdictions.

## **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission endorses the Panel developed *Great Lakes Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Species* and encourages the Great Lakes governors and premiers to sign the Action Plan and use it as guidance in their individual and collective prevention and control efforts. The eight Great Lakes states, acting through the Great Lakes Commission, accept the Action Plan and agree to direct management priorities and available resources accordingly.

The Commission supports efforts by the Great Lakes states to develop state ANS management plan and encourages them to utilize the *Model Comprehensive State Management Plan* developed by the Panel as guidance. The Commission supports full funding and implementation of state plans, as described and authorized in U.S. federal law. The Commission encourages its member states to support research and development that will prevent the introduction and dispersal of ANS in the Great Lakes basin through the use of the *Research Guidance for the Prevention and Control of Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Species* in the Great Lakes developed by the Panel and other appropriate sources of information from the Great Lakes Sea Grant Network, International Joint Commission, and state/provincial agencies.

## **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (October 2000): *Great Lakes Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Nonindigenous ANS*

Resolution (September 1999): *Great Lakes Action Plan for ANS Prevention and Control*

Great Lakes Panel Policy Statement (June 1994, adopted by the Commission October 1994)

Great Lakes Panel Research Policy Statement (October 1997)

**Information and Education for ANS Prevention and Control:** Significant federal and state resources have been invested in educational outreach programs on ANS prevention and control being implemented on a state, regional and national scale to target high risk behaviors of user groups associated with various ANS vectors. The Great Lakes Panel on ANS has adopted an *Information/Education (I/E) Strategy for Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control* that offers regional guidance, coordination and evaluation regarding I/E activities for the benefit of all stakeholders in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region. Two national public education/partnership campaigns have been established to optimize the effectiveness of ANS outreach efforts to priority user groups: Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers!<sup>TM</sup> and Habitattitude<sup>TM</sup>.

## **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission acknowledges the value of national outreach campaigns to help prevent ANS introduction and spread. The Commission is committed to collaborate with the national ANS Task Force and the Great Lakes Panel to advance ANS prevention and control in the Great Lakes as well as other regions of the country. The Commission supports becoming a formal partner with the outreach campaigns Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers!<sup>TM</sup> And Habitattitude<sup>TM</sup>. The Commission endorses the Panel's I/E Strategy and encourages its members, Observer agencies, and other partners to embrace, promote, and employ it as guidance in their own prevention and control efforts. The Commission recognizes the continuing importance of information, education, and outreach efforts in ANS prevention and control, and will ensure that such needs are communicated to the U.S. Congress as NISA reauthorization proceeds.

## **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (May 2006): *Partnering with National Aquatic Invasive Species Outreach Campaign: Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers!<sup>TM</sup> And Habitattitude<sup>TM</sup>*

[Resolution](#) (October 2001): *Implementation of the Information/Education Strategy for Aquatic Nuisance Species Prevention and Control*

## **Related Positions**

[Fish & Wildlife Management](#)

[Maritime Industry & Environmental Policy](#)

### **Issue Overview**

The Great Lakes Commission recognizes that public awareness and concern over toxic chemical contamination in the air, soil, water, and food chains of the Great Lakes Basin has risen dramatically in the last three decades. Analyses have shown that some Great Lakes fish, through biomagnifications, contain measurable levels of as many as 500 different toxic chemicals, although the majority of these chemicals have not been structurally identified. The number of toxic contaminants, coupled with the diffuse sources, complex interactions, and a limited understanding of impacts, present a great challenge to the management of Great Lakes land and water resources.

Although data collection for the Great Lakes Basin is improving at the state and federal levels, uncertainties do exist as to how much toxic and hazardous waste is generated, and the magnitude of the health impacts and environmental effects from toxic contaminant releases. Inadequacies in baseline data obscure the scope and complexity of such problems and impede effective control.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports state and federal enforcement of prohibitions on toxic substance discharge into Great Lakes waters from terrestrial, aquatic, and atmospheric sources. Existing U.S. EPA and Great Lakes state NPDES permit systems for the discharge of toxic substances must be reviewed and strengthened, as appropriate, and should consider ambient water quality in the determination of waste load allocations.

Practices relating to the treatment, storage, and facility siting for hazardous wastes in the Great Lakes Basin must be reviewed and improved, as appropriate, by the U.S. EPA and the Great Lakes states. The U.S. EPA must aggressively apply Superfund funding to the immediate clean up of known serious hazardous waste sites while surveying other potential sites in the Great Lakes Basin.

### **Policy Reference**

Resolution (October 1981)

### **Related Positions**

[Fish Consumption Advisories](#)

[Atmospheric Deposition](#)

### **Issue Overview**

In the Great Lakes region, airborne transport and deposition of toxic contaminants and other pollutants have broad implications for human health, environmental quality, and the use and development of water resources. In order to understand and solve this problem, identification and quantification of toxic emission sources and improved understanding of atmospheric pathways and environmental fate are needed. For many chemicals and sources, promulgation of national air emission standards and mitigation of nonregulated sources require additional study to identify and quantify pollutant loadings, pathways and sources. Further, an International Joint Commission report found that efforts targeting airborne persistent toxic substances are lacking in organization, coordination, information exchange, and fundamental breadth.

The 1986 Great Lakes Toxic Substances Control Agreement established a framework for coordinating regional action to quantify and control toxic pollutants entering the Great Lakes system. The eight Great Lakes states and the province of Ontario began to work cooperatively in 1987 to develop a regional inventory of toxic air emissions. This work has resulted in a regional inventory of air emissions of more than 200 toxic compounds from more than 2000 source types.

The Great Lakes Air Deposition (GLAD) program supports the goals of national, state, and provincial governments under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, the Binational Toxics Strategy, the Great Lakes Toxic Substances Control Agreement, the U.S. EPA's Great Lakes Program and the North American Regional Action Plans. The GLAD Program supports coordinated regional efforts among state, federal, tribal, and local governmental programs and partnering organizations to identify and characterize atmospheric deposition sources; implement accurate and comprehensive emission inventories; monitor and model contaminant deposition and fate; and assess the impacts and risks of atmospheric deposition of toxic pollutants on human health and the ecosystem.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission, upon recommendation of the regional toxic air emissions steering committee, supports continued compilation and updating of the regional air toxic emissions inventory data. To improve the inventory, the Commission supports the convening of a conference to 1) identify the highest priority goals for collective emissions inventory development and atmospheric deposition studies; 2) expand dialogue between state/provincial inventory personnel and the scientific community for the purpose of prioritizing data collection needs; and 3) identify opportunities to encourage use of the emissions inventory in related public policy decision-making activities. The Commission will enhance its regional emission inventories by providing, in a comprehensive and comparable form, all possible information required as input for models, impact assessments, and policy development.

The Commission supports increased U.S. federal funding to establish basin-wide atmospheric deposition monitoring that includes standardization in sampling and analytical protocols and allows identification of spatial and temporal trends. Long-term funding is also needed to establish atmospheric and mass-balance modeling programs for each of the Great Lakes to monitor the sources, transport mechanisms, and the fate of persistent toxic substances. The Commission supports efforts by the Great Lakes states to reduce human health risks through the development of pollution prevention strategies to prevent the formation of dioxin and other toxic chemicals from incineration.

The Commission will develop a long-term strategy in partnership with each of the Great Lakes states and Ontario, to incorporate air deposition monitoring activities into existing activities. The Great Lakes Commission will pursue this opportunity, together with the U.S. EPA Air and Radiation Division, Region 5, each of the eight Great Lakes states and Ontario, in support of the Clean Air Act's (section 112(m)) goal to reduce atmospheric deposition of toxics to the Great Lakes and the research goals of Total Maximum Daily Load program and the Urban Air Toxics Program.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (2003): *Expansion of Regional Atmospheric Deposition Programs*

[Resolution](#) (2000): *Promoting Further Air Deposition Research in the Great Lakes*

Resolution (September 1995): *Expansion and Use of the Regional Toxic Air Emissions Inventory*

Summary Position Statement (adopted October 1987)

### **Related Positions**

[Toxic Substances](#)

### **Issue Overview**

The United States-Canada Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement of 1972, as amended, provides for the designation of Areas of Concern (AOCs) in need of remedial actions to address documented pollution problems that have led to the impairment of beneficial uses. Thirty-one AOCs have been designated in the U.S., each with a Remedial Action Plan (RAP) to coordinate and focus the efforts of government and other stakeholders. Substantial progress has been made in characterizing the sources and causes of beneficial use impairments (BUIs), identifying necessary remediation activities, and generating broad stakeholder involvement in, and support for, the RAP process. Many RAPs are entering the implementation phase which requires substantial resources for cleanup actions, pollution prevention efforts, and related activities. These resources are dispersed among a variety of federal and state agencies. Most of these resources are not specifically directed toward AOC restoration and no single agency has adequate resources to fully restore all of the AOCs. AOC restoration efforts are administered largely at the state and local level with oversight from the U.S. EPA and support from other federal agencies. Improved and continued technical guidance and coordination by agency staff is critically important to implementing RAPs and maintaining progress in restoring the AOCs and the broader Great Lakes ecosystem.

The Great Lakes Legacy Act authorizes federal funding for monitoring, assessing, and cleaning up contaminated sediments in AOCs. The Legacy Act, coupled with state-specific programs, is a highly successful environmental cleanup program for the Great Lakes. However, substantial need remains for remediation of contaminated sediments in the AOCs, with cleanup costs projected between \$1.5 and \$4.5 billion. Reauthorization of the Legacy Act in 2008 expanded the use of federal funds under the Act to restore habitat and in the AOCs and conduct site assessments.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports the U.S. EPA established Federal-State AOC Coordinating Committee as a mechanism for coordinating regional efforts to restore AOCs. The Commission calls on members of the Federal Great Lakes Interagency Task Force, the Great Lakes states and other partners involved in AOC restoration efforts to participate actively on the Committee and to optimize its value in consolidating and applying resources needed to restore AOCs. The Commission encourages the Committee to include and communicate regularly with local AOC advisory groups, and to report periodically on accomplishments, contributions from agencies, and resources and policy changes needed to complete AOC restoration efforts. The Commission recognizes the importance of and encourages adequate support for state agencies and designated citizen advisory councils in coordinating and leveraging resources for AOC RAPs.

The Commission supports the collaborative development of measurable, science-based restoration targets for AOCs that provide an objective and credible mechanism for documenting progress in restoring beneficial uses and, ultimately, justifying the delisting of individual AOCs when the targets have been met. The Commission calls on relevant U.S. federal and state agencies to coordinate their programs to provide assistance and guidance to RAP participants in developing these targets and the monitoring necessary to document progress in achieving targets and facilitating AOC delisting.

The Commission supports full funding of the Legacy Act at its current authorized level of \$54 million annually and calls on Congress to increase the authorized level \$150 million a year. The Commission calls on the Great Lakes states and other partners to make every effort to secure the nonfederal funding required under the Legacy Act to implement important remediation projects in the AOCs. The Commission urges the states and EPA to consult with affected local communities and designated AOC advisory groups regarding the selection and implementation of cleanup projects under the Act. The Commission encourages the EPA to avoid undue delays and minimize the investment of resources in providing assurances that the agency has conducted reasonable inquiries to identify responsible parties for potential Legacy Act sites. Finally, the Commission encourages the use of Legacy Act funds to restore habitat and conduct site assessments.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (October 2008): *Great Lakes Commission support for legislation reauthorizing the Great Lakes Legacy Act*

[Resolution](#) (May 2006): *Support for the U.S. Federal-State Areas of Concern Coordinating Committee and Expedited Restoration Efforts for Great Lakes Areas of Concern*

[Resolution](#) (October 2003): *Supporting the Development of Science-Based, Locally-Derived Restoration Goals for the Great Lakes Areas of Concern*

[Resolution](#) (April 2003): *Full Funding for the Great Lakes Legacy Act to Expedite Restoration and Delisting of Great Lakes Areas of Concern*

[Resolution](#) (May 2002): *U.S. Federal Support for Restoration and Delisting of the Great Lakes Areas of Concern*

[Resolution](#) (May 2001): *Federal Support for Restoration and Delisting of Great Lakes Areas of Concern*

### **Related Positions**

[Federal Water Quality Assistance](#)

### **Issue Overview**

The Great Lakes region produces, refines and transports substantial quantities of oil, natural gas and hazardous materials. Extensive development of these energy sources and their transportation creates the potential for a spill with significant consequences. The much-publicized 1989 Exxon Valdez incident in Prince William Sound, Alaska, focused attention on the need for developing regional response capabilities as well as building a regional capacity for anticipating, responding to and preventing oil and hazardous material spills. The Great Lakes are highly vulnerable to spills from both ships and land-based facilities. The Great Lakes are a relatively closed freshwater system; a series of large lakes with long retention times. The basin is a fragile, highly sensitive ecosystem that includes a thriving sport fishery and some of the most productive freshwater wetlands in the world. These facts, coupled with the added difficulties in containing spills under ice or spills of water-soluble toxics, accentuate its vulnerability. A spill of any magnitude has the potential for devastating environmental, human health, and economic impacts.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission's Emergency Preparedness Task Force prepared a report for the Commission in 1989 which presented a policy position statement on findings and recommendations. The recommendations were subsequently adopted by the Commission and include actions that address the individual and collective response capabilities of Great Lakes jurisdictions; U.S. federal role in Great Lakes spill planning/response; data collection and inventory needs; research, technology and education needs; and vessel safety. The Task Force report and policy statement is available online at: <http://www.glc.org/policy/documents/EmergencyPreparednessPrograms-Sept1990.pdf>.

The Commission supports continuation and expansion of programs and adequate funding levels at all appropriate levels of government to ensure full and effective implementation of existing planning, regulatory, enforcement, inspection, monitoring and response capabilities. Federal, regional, and state contingency plans should be reviewed and revised, as needed, to ensure that the unique requirements of the Great Lakes system are taken into consideration by these plans.

The Commission supports a Great Lakes Spill Response Network or equivalent mechanism to coordinate planning activities for anticipating, responding to, and preventing oil and hazardous material spills on the Great Lakes. At least one federally-supported spill response center should be established within the Great Lakes basin. This response center should provide technical information to the response and regulated communities, as well as general information on spill prevention and response.

The Commission supports the improvement of spill risk assessment by enhancing the quality, uniformity and consistency of data collected and maintained by the U.S. federal government regarding the type, mode and volume of spills. To do so, the U.S. EPA and the U.S. Coast Guard, with the advice and assistance of the Great Lakes states and industry, should develop and implement uniform and consistent standards for the data that are currently provided related to oil spill events. This effort must not be viewed as a mandate for additional data collection or reporting requirements for industry.

The Commission endorses federal governments, with the advice and assistance of the Great Lakes states and provinces, taking a leadership role in promoting and funding both the development of new technologies for spill response, and basic research that can help assess and minimize the environmental, human health, fish, wildlife and botanical habitat, and economic damages associated with a spill event. Special attention should be given to technologies to address freshwater, under-ice, and water soluble toxic spills. Means to minimize the use and handling of toxics in situations that pose potential spill threats should also be considered.

The Commission opposes the relaxation of regulations that may compromise the safety of vessel transits and increase the likelihood of spill incidents. The two federal governments, acting through their respective Coast Guards, as appropriate, should continue to review and make recommendations in the areas of construction standards for vessels transporting oil and hazardous materials (e.g. double bottoms); the need for shipboard oil spill response equipment; sources and means to reduce human error factors in spill incidents (e.g. training); and programs for effective drug and alcohol testing and treatment.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (May 2001): *Spill Reporting in the Binational St. Clair River-Lake St. Clair-Detroit River Corridor*

Report (June 1996): *Potential for Spills of Oil and Hazardous Materials to Occur in the Great Lakes*

[Policy Statement](#) (November 1989): *Emergency Preparedness for Oil and Hazardous Materials Spills on the Great Lakes*

### **Related Positions**



### **Issue Overview**

In the late 1980s, a series of incidents involving medical wastes on Great Lakes beaches focused the attention of public health officials and policy-makers throughout the region on medical waste management. These incidents did not suggest an immediate, serious public health problem, but did suggest the need for review and possible revision of legislative and program measures to preclude the possibility of such. Numerous state, regional, and federal initiatives were taken in response to these incidents. Several state and federal bills were introduced, specifying an array of programs and procedures ranging from manifest systems and tracking procedures to disposal protocols and penalties and fines. The federal Medical Waste Tracking Act was signed into law. At the regional level, the interjurisdictional implications of the issue were recognized, along with the need for a coordinated framework among the Great Lakes states and provinces.

The Great Lakes Commission formed a Task Force on Medical Disposal in 1988 to prepare a set of common elements that should be reflected in state/provincial laws and programs related to medical waste management in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River region. As part of the work of the task force, medical waste handling and disposal practices and regulations were reviewed in every Great Lakes state and Ontario. In its report to the Commission, "Medical Waste Management in the Great Lakes Region: Legislative and Program Recommendations", general findings and recommendations were presented and subsequently adopted by the Commission. As a result of this important report, many of the identified medical waste management issues have been addressed at the federal, state, and provincial levels through legislative action and education programs. The report is available online at: <http://www.glc.org/policy/documents/MedicalWasteManagement-Dec1988.pdf>.

The Great Lakes Commission continues to work with its member states to periodically review the recommendations from the 1988 report and encourages the appropriate federal, state and provincial agencies, and the broader public health community to monitor the progress in implementing the medical waste management strategy outlined in the report.

### **GLC Position**

No current policy positions. Please refer to the Task Force on Medical Disposal report referenced above.

### **Policy Reference**

[Report](#) (November 1988): *Medical Waste Management in the Great Lakes Region: Legislation and Program Recommendations*

### **Related Positions**

### **Issue Overview**

Agriculture is a leading industry in every Great Lakes state and province. In the U.S., the eight Great Lakes states account for 30% of all agricultural sales nationwide – a \$45 billion a year industry that encompasses more than 170 million acres of land. 22 million of these acres lie within the Great Lakes basin. The eight states account for more than 26% of the nation's total agricultural exports and produce most of the nation's corn, soybeans, and milk. Canadian figures are equally impressive. More than 13 million acres are in agricultural production in Ontario and in-basin farms account for 22% of total Canadian agricultural production. The economic and environmental impacts of Great Lakes Basin agriculture are pronounced. Environmental concerns include soil erosion and soil quality; loss of nutrients and nutrient management; sedimentation; animal waste and manure management; loss of wetlands, habitat and biodiversity; urban/rural interface, and the use and management of pesticides. Economic issues include changes in land use and loss of farmland, crop diversity, farm income and commodity exports.

The Farm Bill, first passed in 1985, has become a critical federal vehicle in providing landowners and resource managers with guidance and assistance in protecting and enhancing the nation's natural resources. Under the Farm Bill, specific U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)—Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) programs such as the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control, have been effective tools for improving habitat, managing sediment, and advancing soil and water conservation efforts in the basin. The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration (GLRC) cited the Farm Bill as an important conservation management tool for protecting a number of Great Lakes resources.

Beginning in 1994, a binational project team began developing a basin-specific profile of agricultural production, land use, and environmental impacts and trends as a necessary foundation to the understanding of Great Lakes basin agriculture and for the formulation of research, management, and policy options. This profile was completed in April 1996 and in August 1996, the Agricultural Profile Project Team, along with a binational multi-jurisdictional Agriculture Advisory Committee, prepared the report "An Action Agenda for Great Lakes Basin Agriculture". The Action Agenda includes findings and recommendations related to Great Lakes agriculture in areas of economic and production dimensions; natural resources and environmental dimensions; fish, wildlife, and ecological dimensions; health and ecological impacts of current use pesticides; environmental programs, policies and regulations; and technology creation and transfer.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports the findings and recommendations of *An Action Agenda for Great Lakes Basin Agriculture*, available online at: <http://www.glc.org/policy/documents/ActionAgenda-GLBasinAgriculture-Aug1996.pdf>.

The Commission supports strengthening the Conservation Title of the Farm Bill in order to further protect and improve Great Lakes water quality, specifically, programs that further the restoration goals of the GLRC and the Great Lakes Governors. The Commission supports reauthorization of the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), the Forestry Incentives Program (FIP), Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) and the Farmland Protection Program (FRP). The Commission urges Congress to provide adequate funding for the USDA-NRSC to provide technical and financial assistance to carry out environmental, natural resources and water quality protection programs under the bill.

The Commission supports conservation provisions in the 2002 Farm Bill that emphasize Great Lakes basin ecosystem health; enhance the quality of life in the Great Lakes basin; maintain or restore air, soil, and water quality in local watersheds; and contribute to the production of safe and affordable food and fiber products. Specifically, the Commission urges Congress to reauthorize the Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control as a specific Great Lakes program to improve water quality through the reduction of erosion and sedimentation.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (October 2006): *Great Lakes Commission Support for Reauthorization of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill)*

[Resolution](#) (May 2001): *Reauthorization of the Federal Agriculture Improvement Act (Farm Bill) of 1996 and Authorization of the Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control*

[Report](#) (August 1996): *An Action Agenda for Great Lakes Basin Agriculture*

### **Related Positions**

[Soil Erosion & Sedimentation](#)

### **Issue Overview**

Soil erosion and sedimentation are serious problems in the Great Lakes Basin. Erosion, the detachment of soil particles by the actions of rain, wind and other factors, diminishes the productivity of the land resource base. Sedimentation, the deposition of eroded soil, fills harbors, streams and lakes and degrades water quality. Combined, erosion and sedimentation adversely affect recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, and cause federal, state and local governments to incur tremendous costs through increased dredging, ditch and stream channel maintenance, and damages to water treatment and conveyance facilities. Erosion and sedimentation are natural processes that can be accelerated or slowed by human intervention, but never stopped entirely. The challenge for resource managers is to minimize erosion rates and control sedimentation to maintain and improve land and water quality and productivity.

Erosion and sediment control activities, particularly on agricultural cropland, are not one-time remedies. They should be treated as a maintenance program where regular attention is required to have a desirable lasting effect. Land use practices are constantly changing, and erosion and sediment control programs must change as well to be compatible and effective. The public costs of many of these programs are enormous but there are significant public benefits realized through improvements in water quality, fish and wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities. Effective erosion and sediment control programs will also offset the need for increased dredging, stream channel and ditch maintenance, and may help reduce maintenance costs to water treatment and conveyance facilities.

In an effort to protect and improve Great Lakes water quality by controlling erosion and sedimentation, the Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control was initiated in 1991 and authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill. It is a federal/state partnership that has supported well over 200 demonstration and technical assistance projects throughout the Great Lakes region. The Basin Program is coordinated by the Great Lakes Commission in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (Natural Resources Conservation Service), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Great Lakes Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Task Force oversees the program and ensures that goals and objectives are met. On the basis of the work of the Task Force, recommendations have been presented to and adopted by the Great Lakes Commission that address funding; program development; standards and control program; and research and evaluation.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission requests the Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Task Force to evaluate and pursue opportunities to extend its technology transfer efforts to Ontario, Québec and the Canadian federal government and encourages those governments to consider developing similar programs to address soil erosion and sedimentation problems in the Great Lakes basin and St. Lawrence River.

Other recommendations put forth by the Great Lakes Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Task Force as endorsed by the Commission can be found online at: <http://www.glc.org/policy/documents/SoilErosionSedimentation-Nov1987.pdf>.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (October 2000): *Tenth Anniversary of the Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control*  
Commission Action (October 1996)

[Report](#) (October 1987): *Soil Erosion and Sedimentation in the Great Lakes Region*

### **Related Positions**

[Great Lakes Basin Agriculture](#)

## **MARITIME & TRANSPORTATION**

### **Issue Overview**

The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Maritime System is a regional asset of national and global significance that offers a comparative advantage for industry and is a necessary foundation for the economic well-being of the region both in Canada and the U.S. The System is essential for this region's domestic economy and for its exports, reducing manufacturing and distribution costs and providing a healthy, competitive option to other transport modes. To survive and prosper, the System requires efficient operation and maintenance, continuing maintenance and modernization, federal support, aggressive marketing, and governmental policies favorable to maritime commerce. Since completion of the deep-draft St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959, U.S. and Canadian flag commercial navigation in the region has steadily improved through larger, more maneuverable and efficient vessels, better crew training, and modern port facilities. Despite joint construction and operation of the Seaway by the U.S. and Canada, aging navigation infrastructure in combination with vessel size and draft limitations has reduced the potential for maritime transportation on the Seaway.

In 1991, the Great Lakes Commission joined with numerous other Great Lakes and regional organizations in adopting a series of principles for the present and future use, development, and enhancement of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Maritime System. The "Declaration of Indiana," embodies these principles demonstrating regional unity, building national and international awareness of the System, and providing a basis for advocating appropriate federal maritime policies. The Declaration is available online at: <http://glc.org/docs/decind>.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports full consultation and cooperation between Canada and the United States at the federal and state/provincial levels on all maritime matters relating to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway. Policies related to the Seaway should be harmonized between the two governments (e.g. cost recovery, Seaway tolls, system operation and maintenance, etc.) and this cooperation should include long-range planning and policy development for the future of the System. The Commission places priority on the competitiveness of Great Lakes-St. Lawrence maritime transport and feels marketing the System is an essential trade-development activity. Policies, laws, regulations, or practices which unfairly discriminate against the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region must be actively opposed.

The Commission supports operation of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Maritime System to maximize opportunities for maritime commerce. The Commission supports the need for a Great Lakes Navigation System Study with thorough involvement of Canada, Québec, Ontario, and the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation. The Commission supports a strong U.S. federal role in the maintenance of federally-authorized harbors and channels, specifically:

- annually established budget allocations for operation and maintenance that recognize dollar-per-ton costs, regional balance, and system reliability to adequately maintain ports, harbors, and connecting channels;
- elimination of the one million tons of cargo threshold as a requirement for port maintenance; and a
- USACE budget allocation process that uses an impartial methodology to set priorities for the Great Lakes navigation system as well as transportation systems in other regions.

The Commission supports expansion of Great Lakes shipyards for military and non-military shipbuilding contracts and financing construction of commercial vessels designed for bulk commodity transport on the Great Lakes. The Commission supports a regional institution (e.g. Great Lakes Maritime Academy at Traverse City, Mich.) dedicated to the training of future personnel for Great Lakes commercial vessels.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (May 2005): *Support for Allocation of Funds to Adequately Operate and Maintain the Great Lakes Marine Transportation System*

[Resolution](#) (May 2002): *Great Lakes Navigation System Study*

Policy Position (September 1995): *House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport: A National Marine Strategy*

[Declaration of Indiana](#) (May 1991)

Resolution (May 1984)

Resolution (October 1982)

Resolution (May 1981)

Resolution (June 1978)

### **Related Positions**

[Intermodal Transportation](#)

[Water Project Cost-Sharing](#)

[Commercial Navigation Project Funding](#)

**Issue Overview**

Under the terms of the Great Lakes Basin Compact, the Great Lakes Commission is dedicated to the “orderly, integrated, and comprehensive development, use, and conservation of the water resources of the Great Lakes Basin.” Further, the Commission is called upon to advise its member states and larger constituency “in securing and maintaining a proper balance among industrial, commercial, agricultural, water supply, residential, recreational, and other legitimate uses of the water resources of the Basin.” Consistent with its mandates, the Great Lakes Commission recognizes that all sectors of the Great Lakes community must support environmental policy and management initiatives that embrace a philosophy of sustainable development. Open and continuing dialogue between these sectors is essential in the interest of identifying and advancing mutual interests.

**GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports Great Lakes-St. Lawrence maritime industry objectives that incorporate the improvement of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River water quality as a priority. Great Lakes-St. Lawrence maritime interests and regional environmental organizations should pursue opportunities for exchange of information and views on a regular basis, including invitations to make presentations at special and general membership meetings.

**Policy Reference**

Commission Action (May 1994)  
[Declaration of Indiana](#) (May 1991)

**Related Positions**

[Ballast Water Management](#)  
[Pollution Prevention](#)

### **Issue Overview**

Waterborne disease from untreated or inadequately treated sewage is an ongoing concern in the Great Lakes Basin. Increasing public and government concern over fecal bacterial pollution of Great Lakes bathing beaches has raised questions about any linkage with commercial vessels and recreation boats operating in the vicinity. All commercial cargo and overnight cruise vessels plying the Great Lakes are required to have U.S. Coast Guard approved marine sanitation devices (MSDs) in good working order. MSDs usually entail a three part process to treat sewage: use of aerobic bacteria, disinfecting the effluent, and retention or discharge of treated sewage. The relationships among potential inshore and offshore sources of bacterial contamination, and their impact to water quality along our shorelines, are extremely complex. Certain Great Lakes states are considering establishing no-discharge zones on all or part of their Great Lakes waters which would prohibit the operational use of some MSDs in those areas. Wisconsin has established a no-discharge zone for its Lake Michigan waters, and Michigan has done so for all of its Great Lakes waters.

In 1999, the Great Lakes Commission convened a workshop at the request of its member states to discuss the use of MSDs on the Great Lakes and address other relevant issues. The workshop featured speakers on various topics including public health issues, MSD manufacture and function, regulations and enforcement and perspectives of the domestic and overseas commercial navigation industry. The findings of the workshop included: a) malfunction of MSDs on U.S. and Canadian commercial vessels is not a documented problem; and b) further research is needed for a coordinated regional approach that assures the regulation of MSDs is equitable and based upon sound scientific principles.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports:

- Further research be undertaken to identify sources of beach contamination;
- Offshore water quality monitoring that complement inshore methods;
- Thorough consideration of the need for new no-discharge zones; and
- State enforcement of sewage disposal laws for recreational boaters as a priority.

The Commission feels that more research and investigation is needed to address 1) Whether any changes to the current MSD inspection and enforcement efforts is needed; 2) Whether bacterial contamination events can be traced to particular sources through new research and technology; 3) What role marinas and recreational boaters play in sewage/water quality problems.

The Commission supports development of state pollution prevention plans on a voluntary basis. Further, pollution prevention plans and efforts should be multi-media in scope, and if required by a state, should not require federal approval. The Commission supports efforts by all Great Lakes states to institute or maintain, as appropriate, a ban on phosphorus-containing detergents as a means to slow the cultural eutrophication rate within the Great Lakes.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (May 2000): *The Use of Marine Sanitation Devices on the Great Lakes*  
Commission Summary Position Statement (adopted March 1994)  
Commission Summary Position Statement (adopted October 1987)  
Resolution (March 1987)

### **Related Positions**

[Beach Health](#)  
[Maritime Industry & Environmental Policy](#)

### **Issue Overview**

The Great Lakes Commission recognizes the regional and national importance of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River transportation system which is vital to the regional and national economy and is a major determinant of the delivered price of goods. The Commission also recognizes the intermodal character of the system. Cargo movement through Great Lakes ports is dependent on trucks and railroads for delivery and transfer. However, the railroads, in particular, are competitors to Great Lakes shipping in some cargo areas. As railroads attempt to maximize length of hauls and thus increase revenue, the potential for predatory and discriminatory rate practices and cargo diversion may result.

Transportation policy at all governmental levels must take into consideration energy, environmental, and safety factors. Transportation is a major energy use sector in North America, and it has a large impact on environmental quality. Safety – across all modes – has become a priority concern for both the public and government. In 1993, a Great Lakes Commission study revealed that commercial vessels were safer, used less fuel, had fewer emissions, and were better for reducing noise and congestion when compared to equivalent rail and truck movements. Transportation industry and technology changes since the early 1990s, and changes in commodity volumes and routings and roadway congestion, indicate a need to update the 1993 modal shift study. A copy of the study can be found at: <http://www.glc.org/policy/documents/ModalShiftStudy-June1993.pdf>.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission urges the U.S. Administration to develop, coordinate, and monitor a consistent and rational national maritime policy that fully recognizes the Great Lakes as the nation's "fourth seacoast" and that is sensitive to the system's vital contribution to the national and regional economy. Specifically, the Commission:

- opposes any legislation that diverts cargoes from the Great Lakes region to other seacoasts or to other modes of transportation;
- supports a thorough review of any federal action that may increase the financial burden on Great Lakes-St. Lawrence maritime commerce prior to adoption;
- supports the U.S. government's position that the maritime sector should be exempt from the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement;
- supports the existing cabotage laws as the foundation of U.S. maritime policy on the Great Lakes; and
- agrees to pursue an update of the 1993 modal shift study and seek appropriate funding support.

The Commission is opposed to any marine service fees levied by the Government of Canada on vessels that transit Canadian waters to or from U.S. ports that do not stop at a Canadian port.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (October 2001): *Update of Great Lakes Commission's Modal Shift Study*

Resolution (October 1996): *Canada's Marine Service Fees*

Policy Position (September 1995): *House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport: A National Marine Strategy*

Resolution (October 1994)

[Declaration of Indiana](#) (May 1991)

Resolution (July 1987)

Resolution (May 1984)

### **Related Positions**

[Great Lakes—St. Lawrence Maritime System](#)

[Cargo Preference & Promotion](#)



### **Issue Overview**

The Great Lakes region has a strong U.S. Coast Guard presence. The agency, through its Ninth District, performs many vital tasks in protecting the marine environment and ensuring the safety of commercial navigation and the recreational boating public. Specifically, Coast Guard icebreakers play an important role in flood control as well as keeping navigation lanes open during the winter freeze-up and spring break-up. Sufficient budget support for regional Coast Guard operations should be a priority for the Great Lakes Congressional Delegation; however, proposed commercial navigation user fees have become a perennial concern for the maritime industry. Industry concern revolves around two basic issues: the increasing burden of new user fees or “taxes” and the matter of allocating benefit among beneficiaries to maintain equity. Fees for services such as ship inspection pose redundancy problems where fees are already paid to organizations like the American Bureau of Shipping for similar services. Direct fees for documentation, inspection and licensing of U.S. flag vessels could also have the effect of deterring U.S. shipbuilding or, in some cases, efforts to reflag vessels to U.S. registry. Further, aids to navigation, for all appearances a purely maritime function, are maintained just as much to protect life, environment, and property.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports Ninth District U.S. Coast Guard operations and opposes any unreasonable and regionally inequitable budget cutbacks that may jeopardize those operations. Specifically, the Commission opposes closure of any U.S. Coast Guard Ninth District Search and Rescue (SAR) facility unless there is compelling evidence that closure will not place lives in jeopardy. In so doing, the Commission supports the general findings and recommendations of the GAO report entitled, “Better Process Needed to Justify Closing Search and Rescue Stations” (GAO-RCED-90-98). The Commission supports U.S. Congressional appropriations for Great Lakes SAR station maintenance as needed as a means of preserving and enhancing the current manned SAR station network.

The Commission has no position on the matter of general Coast Guard cost recovery, but insists that proposals for any such U.S. user fees should be subjected to an independent and comprehensive impact analysis. The Commission is opposed to any cost recovery for U.S. Great Lakes ice-breaking services and the Commission supports exemption of U.S. flag vessels from any Canadian fee pertaining to icebreaking services in recognition of the fact that the U.S. does not levy such a fee and the existence of an agreement between U.S. and Canadian Coast Guards to assist each other in providing icebreaking services on the Great Lakes.

### **Policy Reference**

Resolution (October 1996): *Canada’s Marine Service Fees*

Policy Position (September 1995): *House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport: A National Marine Strategy*

Policy Statement (May 1991): *Funding for U.S. Coast Guard Operations on the Great Lakes*

### **Related Positions**

[Water Project Cost-Sharing](#)

### **Issue Overview**

The Great Lakes Commission recognizes the importance of a strong, physical U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) presence in the Great Lakes basin and the necessity of preserving and protecting USACE basic Great Lakes-specific functions. Critical expertise in Great Lakes hydraulics, hydrology, navigation system engineering, planning and maintenance, and environmental remediation are essential, as well as adequate flexibility in personnel and other USACE resources to accommodate the growing need and demand for USACE expertise. The Commission had serious concerns about a 1992 "U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Reorganization Plan," specifically elements of the Plan that would compromise the current and potential role of USACE as a partner in Great Lakes resource planning, coordination, environmental protection, and related management activities. Since 1992, alternative reorganization plans have been advanced. Further, the Commission has had concerns over plans to reduce costs of the Civil Works Operation and Maintenance (O&M) Program. O&M cost reduction processes could apply to a wide array of project categories including deep draft navigation and recreational harbor maintenance. The Great Lakes states are concerned that such O&M cost reductions are a departure from USACE historical commitments to maintain harbors and navigation channels and will burden local communities as well as harm the regional economy.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports efforts by the USACE to make its O&M activities more efficient; however, the Commission is concerned that O&M cost reductions may unduly affect Great Lakes region USACE activities compared to other regions and could burden local communities as well as harm the regional economy. The Commission requests the USACE to fully inform and consult with the Great Lakes states individually and collectively through the Commission on substantive matters pertaining to any O&M cost reduction.

The Commission supports maintaining Great Lakes basin planning and coordination capabilities and activities at the Division level under any restructuring scenario, specifically special Great Lakes expertise with the requisite personnel and other resources at the District level within the basin. Specifically, the Commission supports:

- establishment and staffing of a "Great Lakes Planning Coordination Office" at the Division level to preserve a strong USACE presence in critical Basin activities;
- location of one of the 15 proposed "technical centers" within the Basin to provide a focal point for Great Lakes expertise and activities; and
- other actions as needed to maintain a strong partnership role with the Great Lakes Commission, the International Joint Commission, and other relevant regional agencies, organizations and programs as well as the individual state executive offices.

### **Policy Reference**

Resolution (October 1996): *Planned Reduction in Army Corps of Engineers Operations and Maintenance Costs*  
Policy Position (January 1993): *U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Reorganization Plan*

### **Related Positions**

[Water Project Cost-Sharing](#)  
[Commercial Navigation Project Funding](#)  
[Recreational Harbor Maintenance](#)  
[Sault Ste. Marie \(Soo\) Locks Funding](#)

### **Issue Overview**

Due to the large federal deficit, the Great Lakes Commission recognizes that cost-sharing involving non-federal project beneficiaries may be necessary and appropriate in many cases. General water project cost sharing for non-navigation projects covers such project purposes as: flood control; beach erosion; recreation; hydropower; municipal, industrial and agricultural water supply; and wastewater/sewage treatment. The Commission is concerned with the methods of financing available to non-federal participants; with the equity of cost-sharing requirements on a national basis; and with the cumulative impact of all duties, tariffs and other fees on commercial navigation. Policy issues recognized by the Commission include: federal/state cost-sharing agreements, revenue/investment-funding capability by project category, and commitment to ongoing and completed projects.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports federal financial support for major water resource projects of national interest and Congressional establishment of a cost-sharing policy for federal water projects. Cost-sharing policies and arrangements must be applied consistently and equitably across the range of eligible projects.

In the interest of establishing an effective and equitable water resource development procedure, the Commission supports project cost recovery from identifiable beneficiaries of vendible products through user charges, taxation, and the sale of products. Development of cost recovery policies must, however, take due regard of a) the administrative practicality of imposing and collecting charges from all project beneficiaries, particularly where a project has non-vendible products, and b) the financial constraints and economic conditions of the identifiable beneficiaries and communities.

### **Policy Reference**

Commission action (May 1996)  
Resolution (October 1983)  
Resolution (October 1982)

### **Related Positions**

[Great Lakes—St. Lawrence Maritime System](#)  
[U.S. Coast Guard Operations](#)  
[U.S. Army Corp of Engineers Operations](#)  
[Commercial Navigation Project Funding](#)  
[Recreational Harbor Maintenance](#)  
[Sault Ste. Marie \(Soo\) Locks Funding](#)

### **Issue Overview**

North American trade and border control issues are receiving increased governmental and public attention. The U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement and the more recent North American Free Trade Agreement are succeeding in their trade liberalization objectives among Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Trade volume is increasing and will likely continue to in the future. The Great Lakes U.S.-Canada border presents a unique set of challenges given this magnitude of trade flow which is already more than double that of the U.S. and Mexico. Inadequate border-crossing infrastructure and time-consuming border control and inspection processes threaten inventory and distribution systems for manufacturers, and otherwise burden cross-border travel.

The number of Canadian and U.S. recreational boats operating on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River is estimated to be around 1.5 million. Recreational boaters are generally deterred from cross-border visits due to cumbersome and inconvenient U.S. reporting requirements and visits are often illegal as a result of non-compliance with U.S. rules. While the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system provides much of the boundary between the Great Lakes states and Canada, other cross-border travel by private and commercial motor vehicles is available at 30 locations. The purposes of cross border-vehicle travel are varied, including the movement of vast volumes of commercial cargo, job commuting, retail shopping, and a wide range of leisure travel.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports implementation of the December 12, 2001 Smart Border Declaration and its 30 point action plan. The Commission opposes any border crossing revenue measures that could substantially reduce or financially burden people and goods movement across the U.S.-Canadian border or discriminate against the Great Lakes region. The Commission also opposes any reduction in number of U.S. Customs Service personnel based in Great Lakes states who service U.S.-Canada or other international trade unless productivity improvements justify or otherwise offset a workforce reduction. The Commission supports careful consideration of implementing measures that would expedite and improve efficiency of border crossing inspections, such as:

- Consolidation of primary inspection practices of Customs and INS under one agency;
- Use of contract or private inspectors;
- Greater use of joint U.S.-Canadian inspection staff at border crossing points; and
- Utilization of advanced technology applications.

The Commission supports investigating opportunities to promote increased U.S.-Canada maritime trade for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River system as a means to relieve congestion and ease future capacity constraints at existing motor vehicle border crossings. The Commission supports cross-border travel and the promotion of "coastal zone" tourism and outdoor recreation that will provide an economic benefit to both the U.S. and Canada. The Commission supports review and revision of reporting procedures for recreational boats on the Great Lakes, specifically regarding:

- Opening more sites to issue the initial Form I-68;
- Establishing a single reporting-in toll free telephone number system for the Great Lakes;
- Reducing or eliminating variations in administrative procedures among Port of Entry offices; and
- Promoting greater understanding and familiarity with border entry rules and the need for them.

The Commission is concerned that cross-border trade would be negatively impacted by the requirement that all entry and re-entry into the U.S. require a passport, and supports exploration of other secure, but less onerous alternatives.

### **Policy Reference**

Commission public comment to U.S. Federal Docket 2005-0023 on rulemaking, Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (October 2005)

[Resolution](#) (May 2002): *Issues and Opportunities at the U.S.-Canada Border*

[Resolution](#) (May 2001): *Border Entry Rules for Recreational Boats*

Commission Action (May 1996)

Policy Statement (May 1994): *U.S./Canada Border Crossings: Physical Infrastructure and Institutional Issues*

### **Related Positions**

[Water Resources Security](#)

[Recreational Boating & Cruising](#)

[Great Lakes Circle Tour](#)

[International Trade](#)

### **Issue Overview**

The issue of commercial navigation cost recovery for the deep-draft system (14 feet and above) and particular Coast Guard services has been a continuing controversy. Cost recovery has been instituted as a means to reduce federal budget expenditures and promote development of economically justifiable navigation projects. The Canadian federal government has also proposed similar cost recovery mechanisms for some traditional federal navigation responsibilities.

Seaway tolls imposed by both Canadian and U.S. Seaway agencies were instituted with the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959. The imposition of tolls resulted in increased international shipping costs compared with other deep draft port ranges. U.S. Seaway tolls were the only U.S. deep-draft “navigation user fees” charged against commercial navigation until passage of the Water Resources Development Act in 1986. U.S. Seaway tolls were eliminated by the legislation via a refund mechanism from the newly-established Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund. Canadian Seaway tolls remain in effect.

The U.S. Harbor Maintenance Tax (HMT) and Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund were implemented in 1987 to cover a portion of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ operations and maintenance costs. The HMT is based on the value of cargo shipped to or from U.S. ports. The HMT reversed more than 200 years of federal policy for funding all deep draft navigation costs including harbor maintenance from general revenues. The HMT has diverted cargo from U.S. ports in international border areas. In the Great Lakes region it represents an additional burden for waterborne commerce which pays Canadian St. Lawrence Seaway tolls. It discourages coastwise trade as an alternative to more polluting, energy intensive and less safe land transportation.

In 1990, the HMT was more than tripled, which has resulted in a continuing annual surplus in the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF). The HMTF currently generates about \$1.4 billion a year, but only about \$700 million is spent on harbor maintenance resulting in a current surplus of \$4.7 billion in the fund while ports suffer from inadequate maintenance. There is a critical dredging backlog in the Great Lakes region that will cost an estimated \$230 million to eliminate and has caused cargo carriers to reduce their loads by 50 to 270 tons per every inch of draft lost to inadequate dredging. Further, inadequate dredging of federally authorized recreational harbors on the Great Lakes has reduced and sometimes eliminated access to these harbors causing not only severe economic loss, but also significant threat to health and human safety.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports harmonization of policies related to the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Maritime System between the U.S. and Canada (e.g. cost recovery, Seaway tolls, system operation and maintenance). The Commission supports a thorough industry review and a specific impact assessment of any changes in existing maritime user fees or imposition of new levies affecting the maritime industry. Non-routine rehabilitation of the Welland Canal and the Montreal-Lake Ontario Seaway locks and navigation structures should not be funded through Seaway tolls or other special commercial navigation levies. The Commission supports eliminating all tolls on the Seaway.

The Commission calls upon Congress to reform the HMT and HMTF by acting on legislation requiring that expenditures from the HMTF in any given future year equal the amount of revenue generated by the HMT in that year, and that those expenditures be applied to the purpose for which they were originally intended: the operation and maintenance, to full authorized project specifications, through sustainable dredging techniques, of federal ports, harbors and navigation channels serving commercial and recreational traffic. The Commission feels that federal operations and maintenance responsibilities for the deep draft commercial navigation system should be fully federally funded. The Commission requests that the Commission and Great Lakes commercial navigation interests be fully consulted if the federal government proposes any other deep draft harbor funding mechanism.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (February 2009): *Reform of the Harbor Maintenance Tax and Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund*

[Resolution](#) (May 2001): *Harbor Maintenance Tax and Trust Fund*

[Resolution](#) (October 1998): *Harbor Maintenance Funding*

[Declaration of Indiana](#) (May 1991)

### **Related Positions**

[Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Maritime System](#)

[U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Operations](#)

[Water Project Cost-Sharing](#)

[Sault Ste. Marie \(Soo\) Locks Funding](#)

### **Issue Overview**

The Great Lakes Commission recognizes that recreational boating in the Great Lakes region provides a major economic benefit. The Ninth U.S. Coast Guard District, which includes the Great Lakes, reports more registered recreational boats than any other U.S. Coast Guard district. According to recent state registration data, the number of recreational boats in the eight Great Lakes states is approximately 4.5 million or about a third of the national total. The activity of these boats is supported by over 130 boat manufacturers, over 1100 marinas, and over 1300 boat retailers. Ontario and Quebec contribute an additional 2 million recreational boats to the region and a proportional amount of economic activity. The Commission is concerned that Great Lakes recreational boating activity continues to increase, while boating safety and facility development programs have experienced continued reduction in federal funding. In 1999, Congress authorized a study of the economic breadth of recreational boating in the Great Lakes states. The purpose of the study was to identify the economic benefits of federally authorized recreational harbors for comparison to the cost of maintaining them, which primarily involves dredging. Congress directed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which partnered with the Great Lakes Commission, to carry out the study. Michigan State University's Recreational Marine Research Center was brought in to help with the research. The findings of that analysis were released in 2007 and are online at: <http://www.glc.org/recboat>.

User fees for recreational boats were implemented in 1990 and phased out in 1992. User fees are an unfair burden on recreational boaters in the Great Lakes region due to the seasonal nature of boating activity and the large number of resident boaters in the region. In addition, recreational boaters are already subject to a substantial amount of federal excise tax on fuel purchases. Therefore, any impetus for the implementation of "user fees" to support the U.S. Coast Guard budget carries with it serious problems of cost allocation among beneficiaries.

Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River vessel excursions and overnight cruises are attracting new patrons and making a growing contribution to the region's economy. Several hundred thousand passengers board ferries each year, maintaining a tradition of waterborne passenger transportation in the region. Feasibility studies and marketing surveys indicate a substantial demand for multi-day cruise service for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence System, suggesting future opportunities in this sector of the regional waterborne transportation industry.

### **GLC Position**

The Commission supports continued and expanded federal boating safety assistance commensurate with growing regional needs, recognizing a primary state role in the development of policy and the management of boating safety and facility-development programs. The Commission supports federal legislation that reflects the following: 1) a primary state role in development of policy and the management of boating safety and facility development programs; 2) maximum state flexibility; and 3) eligibility of facility development and maintenance as an appropriate funding category.

Recreational boating cost recovery charges, or "user fees," must be vigorously opposed in those instances where they include: annual fees, pronounced increases in navigation chart prices, or institution of charges for related services previously provided at no cost. Recreational boaters are entitled to basic services and products provided by federal agencies as they relate to navigation safety, and they should not be subjected to cost recovery charges. Elimination of such fees must not result in an increase in fees for commercial navigation.

The Commission supports measures, including new U.S. cruise ship construction and re-flagging of foreign vessels, to assist in bringing an overnight cruise vessel service to the Great Lakes.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (October 2007): *Support for Adequate Maintenance of Great Lakes Recreational Harbors*

[Resolution](#) (October 2000): *Recreational Boating*

Coast Guard Policy Statement (May 1991)

Report (November 1988): *Great Lakes Commercial and Recreational Harbor Dredging: Issues and Recommendations*

Report (October 1987): *Excursion, Cruise and Ferry Service*

Resolution (March 1985)

Resolution (October 1983)

Resolution (May 1983)

Resolution (May 1982)

### **Related Positions**

[U.S./Canada Trade & Border Crossings](#)

[Recreational Harbor Maintenance](#)

### **Issue Overview**

Recreational boating is a key component of the multi-billion dollar tourism and outdoor recreation economic sector in the Great Lakes region. Given this, the maintenance of recreational boating channels – including harbor dredging – is in the best economic and safety interests of both the Great Lakes region and the nation. Current federal budgetary constraints of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), intensified recreational boating activity, growing harbor maintenance needs, and fluctuating Great Lakes water levels, have elevated the issue of Great Lakes recreational harbor dredging to one of critical importance. While current policy of the Administration enables the appropriation of funds in the USACE operation and maintenance (O&M) budget for dredging of commercial deep draft harbors, harbors of refuge and subsistence harbors, USACE may not include funds for dredging of recreational harbors in its O&M budget.

The substantial shortfall in O&M funding for USACE continues to create problems in many of the 78 federally authorized shallow draft recreational harbors in the Great Lakes. During periods of low water levels as currently exists on the Great Lakes, the utility of infrastructure, such as launch ramps and both public and private marina docks, is severely compromised. In the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1999, Congress directed USACE to identify the economic benefits of recreational boating in the Great Lakes, so as to further explore a federal interest in the operation and maintenance of recreational harbors in the lakes, including those classified as shallow draft. The result of the WRDA '99 directive was a comprehensive analysis, coordinated by the Great Lakes Commission, of recreational boating's economic benefits to the region. The most significant findings of that analysis were released in 2007 can be found online at: <http://www.glc.org/recboat>.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports adequate funding to maintain recreational harbors and urges appropriate federal agencies to join in partnership with the states, coastal communities and the recreational boating community to explore new approaches to funding that would assure adequate maintenance of and access to Great Lakes recreational harbors.

The Commission supports a re-evaluation of the process by which federally authorized harbor dredging priorities are established by USACE to consider recreation and the total economic impact that recreational activities have on port communities. Recreational uses and benefits should be recognized and considered as commercial navigation activities in USACE economic analyses for harbor and O&M projects. The Commission supports federal O&M activities at all current federally-authorized recreational harbors and equal priority of dredging those harbors with commercial harbors.

The Commission supports an increase in O&M appropriations for the Great Lakes districts of USACE to provide sufficient funding for the maintenance of recreational boat harbors and channels without reducing funding for commercial harbors. The Commission supports local, state, provincial, and federal government efforts to, as appropriate:

- Expand and upgrade public launch ramps and dock structures, and provide adequate public access infrastructure for boaters;
- Ensure that shallow draft harbors and other publicly-maintained recreational navigation channels be dredged on a regular or as-needed basis with particular attention given to periods of low water; and
- Avoid federal user fees for recreational boats and ensure that boating-generated revenue from other types of non-federal fees be directed exclusively for boating-related operations, maintenance, and related activities.

The Commission recognizes that, in addition to federally authorized Great Lakes harbors, there are hundreds of non-federal harbors in need of maintenance dredging. The Commission supports investigation of alternate funding options and sources for the dredging of both federal and non-federal harbors in the interest of augmenting traditional sources.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (October 2007): *Support for Adequate Maintenance of Great Lakes Recreational Harbors*

[Resolution](#) (April 2003): *Recreational Boating Infrastructure in the Great Lakes*

[Resolution](#) (October 2000): *Recreational Boating*

Resolution (April 1990)

Report (November 1988): *Great Lakes Commercial and Recreational Harbor Dredging: Issues and Recommendations*

### **Related Positions**

[U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Operations](#)

[Water Project Cost-Sharing](#)

[Recreational Boating & Cruising](#)

[Dredged Material Management](#)

### **Issue Overview**

The commercial navigation season for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway system is 8½ to 9 months. However, open water movements on the Great Lakes may take place year round. The Seaway and Sault Ste. Marie (Soo) locks, the connecting channels and the upper St. Lawrence River are the system points most affected by winter conditions. While the limited navigation season is a major hindrance to expanding overseas trade through the Seaway, season extension proposals and icebreaking activities carry with them environmental considerations. Significant questions remain regarding environmental consequences of commercial navigation during wintertime ice conditions, particularly for the St. Lawrence River. For the steel industry, use of the Soo Locks at the beginning and end of the navigation season has become a priority concern to accommodate raw material delivery schedules.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports the implementation, on a three-year trial basis, of a short extension of the current average Seaway navigation season until January 1, subject to acceptable environmental conditions, as an inducement for additional cargo traffic. The Commission supports a fixed closing date of January 15 for the Soo Locks.\*

The Commission supports efforts to encourage continuity of regional shipping during the winter shutdown of Seaway navigation. Agreements, shipping documents, and necessary legislation should be pursued as appropriate.

*\*These positions were adopted on a 6-2 vote with Michigan and New York opposing.*

### **Policy Reference**

[Declaration of Indiana](#) (May 1991)  
Executive Committee Action (May 1990)  
Resolution (May 1981)

### **Related Positions**

[Commercial Navigation Project Funding](#)  
[Sault Ste. Marie \(Soo\) Locks Funding](#)



### **Issue Overview**

The locks at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, have played a vital role in waterborne commerce since 1853, when the first ship canal with two locks was built. More than 8 billion tons of cargo have been “locked through” since that date, with iron ore, grain, and coal now the principal commodities. The Poe Lock and the MacArthur Lock handle virtually all traffic at Sault Ste. Marie (Soo) Locks. Due to restricted depths, the Davis and Sabin Locks have been relegated to servicing ballasted vessels, although in recent years the Sabin Lock has been used only sparingly. After about 70 years of useful life, the Davis and Sabin Locks have deteriorated due to natural causes. Their structural stability is threatened, and, hence, the economic stability of the entire Great Lakes-St. Lawrence transportation system. A stability analysis indicates that the walls of both locks are unstable under current design criteria. The work needed to continue operation of the Davis and Sabin Locks is beyond the scope of usual maintenance activities.

The Soo Locks is a unique project, originally authorized in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1986 (P.L. 99-662), that cannot be compared to other deep draft projects and does not fit the standard cost-share arrangement as provided for in WRDA. The Soo Locks complex is a federally built, federally operated, and federally maintained facility. Its project beneficiaries are regional, national, and international in scope. It has national defense value as a principal conduit for raw materials for the steel industry and as an international navigable waterway. Congress recognized the national and international economic interest in the project by authorizing, in WRDA 2007, full federal funding of the project

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission has been on record in support of building a second 1,000 foot "Poe-sized" Lock at Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., since soon after the project was authorized in the Water Resources Development Act of 1986. The Commission urges Congress to act quickly to provide adequate resources to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Soo Lock Expansion Program in 2009 to enable construction and completion of the new lock as soon as possible.

The Commission supports the construction of a second large lock at the Soo to increase capacity and ensure the efficient and reliable operation of the lock complex over the long term, as well as the expeditious securing of construction appropriations. The Commission has repeatedly taken the lead in support of the project by securing a waiver on interest for the non-federal cost share, coming to agreement on a cost share allocation among the eight Great Lakes states, and acting as the non-federal sponsor for the project

The Commission supports development of a consensus regional position on Soo Lock funding and strategy in collaboration with a broad coalition of maritime interests and the eight state governments to ensure project construction.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (October 2008): *Heightened urgency for Soo Lock expansion*  
Resolution (September 1999): *A New Soo Lock*  
Commission Action (March 1998)  
Resolution (October 1997)  
Resolution (April 1997)  
Resolution (October 1996): *Non-federal Cost Share Funding Plan for a Soo Lock*  
Policy Statement (October 1991): *Soo Lock Funding*

### **Related Positions**

[Great Lakes—St. Lawrence Seaway Maritime System](#)  
[U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Operations](#)  
[Water Project Cost-Sharing](#)  
[Commercial Navigation Project Funding](#)  
[Great Lakes—St. Lawrence Navigation Season Extension](#)

### **Issue Overview**

Cargo preference is the reservation, by law, for the transportation on privately owned commercial U.S.-flag vessels for all, or a portion of all, oceanborne cargo moving in international trade as a result of U.S. Government involvement, either directly through contracts or indirectly through federal financial sponsorship or guarantees. In the United States, international waterborne movements subject to cargo preference include all military cargoes (100%), federal property and agricultural or other products sold or donated abroad as part of U.S. foreign aid or related government assistance programs, and goods financed through the Export-Import Bank. The Great Lakes region and adjacent states produce much of the goods available for cargo preference shipments; however, the lack of U.S. flag vessel service between the Great Lakes ports and various overseas destinations is a source of growing frustration. Agricultural interests are concerned about the higher cost of U.S. flag service and its hindrance to concessional export sales. Regional objectives related to military cargo have included designating an “outport” in the Great Lakes and securing more shipments.

Cargo promotion includes all efforts to encourage and market the movement of more cargo through Great Lakes ports and the provision of vessel service. Recent efforts at the regional level have been aimed at general cargo, usually a manufactured product requiring special packaging and handling. Since 1980, active promotion of U.S. coal exports through the St. Lawrence Seaway has taken place as well. Vessel service, pertaining to factors such as size and configuration of vessels; frequency of service; rates; U.S. flag vessel availability; and feeder versus direct movement are a necessary complements to cargo promotion initiatives.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission feels the administration and effect of cargo preference legislation must be reviewed to correct possible illegal or inequitable application of the law to the Great Lakes region. Further, a definitive interpretation of the term “available” is needed, relative to U.S. flag vessels, within the requirements and meaning of the Cargo Preference Act.

The Commission supports consideration by the U.S. and Canadian federal transportation agencies of special support for trade development initiatives undertaken by system ports. Overseas trade missions, where the potential for waterborne shipments exist, should be planned and coordinated with representatives of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence maritime industry and such missions should be continued and periodically reviewed to ensure responsiveness to new trade opportunities. The Commission supports establishment of a U.S. flag overseas liner service in the Great Lakes.

The Commission supports allocation of government-generated cargoes to export ports and shipment, whenever possible, on the basis of lowest-landed cost as determined through a competitive bidding system. The federal government must increase its purchasing and contracting activity in the Great Lakes region to increase cargo preference shipments through Great Lakes ports. A container feeder vessel service has commercial potential for application in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway system and must be fully explored and supported. Increased overseas exports of coal through Great Lakes ports must be encouraged, making full use, among other options, of midstream transfer pioneered in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Federal agriculture agencies and Congressional agriculture committees must also fully consider the economic impact of policy and program changes as they relate to agricultural exports via the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway System.

### **Policy Reference**

[Declaration of Indiana](#) (May 1991)  
Resolution (October 1985)  
Resolution (October 1986)  
Resolution (May 1984)  
Resolution (October 1982)  
Resolution (May 1982)  
Resolution (October 1981)  
Resolution (May 1981)  
Resolution (October 1980)

### **Related Positions**

[Intermodal Transportation](#)

### **Issue Overview**

Dredging in the Great Lakes has been occurring over the last 150 years for a variety of purposes including maintenance of navigation channels, waterfront construction, utilities placement, and environmental remediation. An average of four million cubic yards of sediment is removed from U.S. waters each year, and 80-90 % is either discharged into open waters or placed in a confined disposal facility (CDF). Most CDFs will be full or at design capacity during this decade, and open water placement of dredged material is coming under increasing scrutiny and may become more limited. In addition, chronic underfunding for dredging in the Great Lakes has resulted in a significant backlog which, when combined with current low water levels, has created serious hardship for the Lakes' marine transportation industry.

A majority of the dredged material disposed of in the Great Lakes is not contaminated and can be used beneficially with proper testing and guidelines to protect human health and the environment. Beneficial use of dredged material offers a sustainable long-term management option for dredged material management in the Great Lakes basin. Successful beneficial use projects have demonstrated that dredged material can provide an alternative source of material for beach/littoral nourishment, habitat creation and restoration, landscaping, topsoil creation and enhancement, land creation and reclamation, and the manufacture of aggregates for marketable products such as cement or glass. The current potential for beneficial use is limited however, because of concerns regarding liability and a lack of consistent standards. If beneficial use practices could be expanded, CDF space could be conserved and less open lake disposal would occur.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports a level of funding for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) navigation maintenance dredging in the Great Lakes and connecting channels that is at parity with other U.S. regions and is sufficient to eliminate all navigation maintenance dredging backlogs in the Great Lakes. Disposal of dredged material, including the construction of CDFs, should be considered part of the USACE navigation operation and maintenance program. The Commission supports, in principle, legislation to ensure that construction of, or improvements to, CDFs are activities eligible for cost sharing. Further, management plans for Great Lakes CDFs must be developed that would address contaminant remediation/dredged material reuse issues and future use of closed CDFs. The Commission supports a robust federal program for disposal of contaminated dredged material from Great Lakes basin projects.

With regards to the beneficial use of dredged material, the Commission supports

- Beneficial use as a priority management option;
- Expanding federal research and funding to include beneficial use;
- Expanding USACE authority under the Water Resources Development Act to include a wide range of beneficial uses, in addition to the protection, restoration, and creation of aquatic habitat; and
- Issuing guidance on beneficial use to address the acknowledged uncertainties as to dredged material contaminant criteria and its subsequent use for particular purposes.

The Commission supports member state efforts to individually undertake multi-agency initiatives to evaluate existing state policies for purposes of developing comprehensive state programs for testing, evaluating, and managing dredged material as a resource. States should also work with USACE and USEPA to coordinate state policies for beneficial use.

The Commission supports a USACE review of the current policy utilized for evaluating the "Federal Standard." The current policy does not adequately consider state laws and standards in evaluating the cost/effectiveness of dredged material management alternatives. The Commission feels that no alternative that would violate state standards should be found acceptable as the Federal Standard. The Commission supports Dredged Material Management Plans that provide a comprehensive, multi-option evaluation of disposal alternatives, taking into account state environmental regulations.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (May 2004): *Navigation Maintenance Dredging in the Great Lakes and Connecting Channels*

[Resolution](#) (May 2001): *Making Beneficial Use of Dredged Material a Policy Priority*

[Resolution](#) (May 2000): *Beneficial Use of Dredged Material*

Policy Statement (January 1997): *Great Lakes-Related Provisions in the Water Resources Development Act of 1996*

Policy Position (September 1995): *Great Lakes Dredging Issues: Recommendations for Great Lakes Commission Action*

Report (November 1988): *Great Lakes Commercial and Recreational Harbor Dredging: Issues and Recommendations*

### **Related Positions**

[Recreational Harbor Maintenance](#)

## **SUSTAINABILITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **Issue Overview**

Economic development is impacted by policy decisions in both the public and private sectors. In light of diminishing public dollars for economic development, the provision of fiscal incentives for private business development and job growth is an increasing trend. The “Ecosystem Charter for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Basin” of 1994 laid out a framework for the joint promotion of economic development and environmental protection that was coordinated by the Great Lakes Commission and endorsed by a multitude of regional partners. A continuing problem is the low level of federal funds returned to the Great Lakes states – an unfavorable federal funding flow representing the difference between federal revenues and disbursements in the region. The Great Lakes states are determined to rectify federal action that discriminates against the region.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports a continuing assessment of the regional economy, significant trends, and policy alternatives that should be undertaken by the Great Lakes states and appropriate regional organizations. Specifically, the Commission supports:

- Promotion of the sustainable use of renewable natural resources;
- Promotion of access to abundant quantities of high quality water as an essential economic development ingredient by Great Lakes states and communities in their business expansion, retention, and recruitment efforts;
- Preparation of a model port land development policy by local officials, including port directors from Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River communities;
- Increasing the number of military and non-military shipbuilding contracts to Great Lakes shipyards and U.S. construction of all U.S. Army and Coast Guard vessels;
- Opposition of any federal legislation that would significantly restrict the use of Industrial Development Bonds;
- Eligibility of communities in the Great Lakes states and port areas for enterprise zone and designated community development funding through federal legislation or administrative action; and
- Careful consideration by regional policymakers of specific port development projects on the basis of positive economic spin-offs and long-term investment in efficient transportation facilities.

### **Policy Reference**

Ecosystem Charter for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Basin (Endorsed October 1994)

Liquid Asset: Great Lakes Water Quality and Industry Needs (1992)

[Declaration of Indiana](#) (May 1991)

Resolution (September 1990)

Resolution (October 1983)

Resolution (October 1982)

Resolution (May 1982)

### **Related Positions**

### **Issue Overview**

International trade is a vital component of the national and regional economies of the U.S. and Canada. Large trade deficits, import penetration of domestic markets, and non-tariff barriers to U.S. and Canadian exports are major concerns in trade policy. Relative to other regions, the Great Lakes is particularly sensitive to changes in the international trade environment. The regional concentration of certain industries, such as export crop production, steel, and automobiles, has magnified the negative impacts of particular trade problems.

Trade between the U.S. and Canada is also of major significance for the region. Canada is America's leading trade partner, and much of that trade is with the eight Great Lakes states. U.S. exports to Canada constitute nearly one-fifth of U.S. total exports, and more than four-fifths of Canadian exports are to the U.S.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports the creation of a cabinet-level agency within the U.S. federal government to centralize and coordinate an international trade policy that promotes U.S. exports and remedies unfair foreign trade practices. Government programs should promote an equitable and economically-efficient transportation system, and provide measures that support and encourage trade. Competitiveness of Great Lakes-St. Lawrence maritime transport in world trade and vis-à-vis competing transportation systems and regions must be given priority.

The U.S. and Canadian governments should consider the merits of a bilateral treaty reserving cross-border cargoes to U.S. and Canadian flag vessels to ensure the viability of both nations' merchant fleets, especially on the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence System.

### **Policy Reference**

[Declaration of Indiana](#) (May 1991)  
Resolution (April 1990)  
Executive Committee Action (July 1987)  
Resolution (May 1984)  
Resolution (October 1983)  
Resolution (October 1980)  
Resolution (June 1980)

### **Related Positions**

[U.S./Canada Trade & Border Crossings](#)

### **Issue Overview**

A key component of the environmental and economic prosperity of the Great Lakes region is environmentally safe, reliable, and affordable energy supplies. Energy supplies for the Great Lakes depend on a highly integrated regional and nation-wide network of marine transportation, generating facilities, transmission lines, pipelines, and refineries. The Great Lakes are integral components of the energy transmission infrastructure system. The interrelationship between energy, environment and economy in the Great Lakes region has gained elevated profile in recent years through proposed directional drilling for oil and gas, proposed pipelines on or beneath lake beds, proposed energy transmission facilities, and increased concerns over security. The Great Lakes Commission – through provisions of the Great Lakes Basin Compact – is authorized to undertake plans and studies and make recommendations on the linkage between energy, environment and the economy.

Another significant linkage occurs between energy and water. Ensuring clean safe water requires large amounts of energy to supply, purify, distribute, and treat water and wastewater. Conversely, supplying energy requires large amounts of water and impacts water quality, water quantity and water-dependent natural resources. There is concern that as the largest source of freshwater in the world, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River region is particularly attractive for water-intensive energy production and potentially competing demands on water resources. Recent agreements now require new and existing water withdrawals to demonstrate efficient use of water resources. Further, energy planning and water planning are currently done separately, compromising the region's ability to effectively evaluate and plan for future water and energy needs. As a result, there is an emerging need for new protocols and management models that engage water resources management and energy generation in consultative planning processes.

A third area of interest to the region is renewable energy. Renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, geothermal and biomass can avoid or reduce damaging impacts of other energy sources such as air emissions, water consumption, thermal pollution, waste, noise and adverse land-use impacts. In the U.S., the federal renewable energy production tax credit (PTC) provides a tax credit for the first 10 years of a renewable energy facility's operation. The PTC has been a major driver of wind power development in recent years. The U.S. Department of Energy reported that increasing wind development would yield significant benefits in generating economic output, saving water and reducing carbon emissions.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission will explore and pursue – through its staff, membership, and partners – opportunities to contribute to the development of regional, national, and binational energy policy as it relates to use and management of the resources of the Great Lakes Basin.

The Commission supports the establishment of new protocols and management models that engage water resources management and energy generation in consultative planning processes. The Commission encourages consultation with Great Lakes state and provincial water resource planning agencies to evaluate and make recommendations concerning water use by the energy sector (including, fossil-fuel fired power, nuclear, refining and biofuels plants) to achieve water efficiencies and conservation objectives as envisioned by the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement and the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact. The Commission calls on federal agencies, including the U.S. EPA, Department of Interior (USGS) the U.S. Department of Energy, Environment Canada, Natural Resources Canada, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada to collaborate with each other and consult with the Great Lakes states and provinces concerning energy and water policies. Finally, the Commission stands ready to help position the region as a global center for clean water, renewable energy and energy efficient technologies.

The Commission supports the PTC as a critical federal policy incentive to produce new jobs and develop clean energy sources that will benefit the Great Lakes region and recognizes that inconsistency in the PTC contributes to a boom-bust cycle of development that plagues development of wind and other renewable energy sources. The Commission urges Congress to support extension of the PTC and energy efficiency measures beyond 2009.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (September 2009): *The Water Energy-Nexus: Linking Water and Energy Planning in the Great Lakes*  
[Resolution](#) (October 2008): *Support for extension of the Federal Production Tax Credit and Federal Energy Efficiency Policy*  
[Resolution](#) (May 2002): *Examining the Energy/Environment/Economy Linkage*

### **Related Positions**

[Sustainable Water Use](#)

### **Issue Overview**

Inefficient and unsustainable land use practices represent a continuing trend and a major threat to the Great Lakes ecosystem. The linkage between land use and water quality has been increasingly well documented in recent years. The continuing urbanization of the Great Lakes basin, particularly in coastal areas and along major tributaries, has significant implications for issues such as environmental quality, transportation requirements, water supply and treatment infrastructure costs. Urbanization also contributes to the persistence of thousands of “brownfields” in the Great Lakes region. Brownfields are abandoned and/or underutilized industrial and commercial properties that have real or perceived contamination. Brownfields cleanup and redevelopment is challenged by issues of liability for past contamination, inadequate financing and weaker market conditions in central cities.

Informed land use planning and management practices, including brownfields redevelopment and land protection programs, have demonstrated environmental, socio-economic, cultural, and quality of life benefits. Several Great Lakes states have made steps to advance sustainable land use that recognizes the inherent linkage of redevelopment of urban brownfields with the protection of greenfields. Greenfields include urban parks, ecological and recreational corridors and agricultural lands, all of which are vital elements of the Great Lakes Basin’s “green”, or natural, infrastructure. These unbuilt lands provide infiltration that allows for the regulation of flooding and drought and mitigation of water quality and aquatic habitat degradation from runoff.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports development of a major binational study that updates understanding of land use trends and impacts in the Great Lakes basin, and suggests prospective policy responses based on environmentally and economically responsible design solutions. The Commission pledges to work in partnership with other relevant agencies and organizations and to provide technical, planning, policy, and outreach services that yield recommendations for environmentally and economically sound land use management practices.

The Commission urges and will support efforts of its member jurisdictions to:

- Consider strategic actions presented in the Bridges Report (2001) that are not currently part of existing state policy, identify ways and means necessary for their adoption and implementation, and adopt and implement those strategic actions within their jurisdiction;
- Provide for mutually supportive brownfields redevelopment and greenfields protection at the local level;
- Review their programs to revise and reduce those policies that subsidize economic development in greenfields at the expense of development in areas with existing urban infrastructure;
- Direct new large-scale greenfields development projects away from prime farmland; and
- Require fiscal impact analyses to evaluate the costs and benefits of locating large-scale projects (e.g., steel mills, intermodal distribution centers, auto assembly plants) in urban areas versus greenfields when public funding and/or tax incentives are involved.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (October 2003): *A Basinwide Study of Land Use Trends, Impacts and Policy Responses*

[Resolution](#) (October 2001): *Advancing Brownfields Redevelopment and Greenfields Protection*

[Resolution](#) (May 2000): *Linking Brownfields Redevelopment and Greenfields Protection*

### **Related Positions**



### **Issue Overview**

The 6,500-mile Great Lakes Circle Tour was established in 1989 by the Great Lakes Commission, the eight Great Lakes states and two Canadian provinces as a regional, cooperative effort to promote designation of a binational Great Lakes road system. This road system encourages travel and tourism along the most scenic coastal areas of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River. The primary marketing tool, the Great Lakes Circle Tour website, still receives hundreds of inquiries a year indicating continued, widespread interest in the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence region as a tourism destination. There is a new generation of web-based, interactive technologies and geographical information system functions that offer new opportunities to promote and enhance the Great Lakes Circle Tour experience. Several Great Lakes—St. Lawrence states and provinces are already actively developing and marketing such products, including Ohio's Lake Erie Coastal Ohio Trail Scenic Byway, Michigan's Maritime Heritage Destination, and New York and Pennsylvania's Seaway Trail. These initiatives are collectively known as "geotourism", one of the fastest growing sectors of the travel industry. Geotourism is defined by National Geographic as "tourism that supports the geographical character of a place – its environment, culture, heritage, aesthetics, and the well-being of its citizens."

### **GLC Position**

The Commission supports the promotion and enhancement of the Great Lakes Circle Tour and recommends that the concept of geotourism be integrated into the Circle Tour. The Commission supports the exploration of new marketing tools for the Circle Tour, such as an interactive, multimedia online experience featuring a "virtual" Circle Tour that can be customized by users, with features such as images and descriptions of natural and cultural attractions and suggested seasonal mini-tours. Further, the Commission feels the Circle Tour should complement designated scenic route systems (both existing and proposed) to ensure the autonomy of the governmental/non-governmental entities promoting them and the designation of circle tour systems in all relevant areas that are not yet so designated. The Commission recognizes Circle Tour development and promotion as a public-private sector partnership, and will pursue linkages with appropriate agencies, organizations, businesses, and other entities to that end.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (September 2005): *Support for Re-energizing the Great Lakes Circle Tour*  
Policy Statement (November 1989): *Great Lakes Circle Tour*

### **Related Positions**

[U.S. / Canada Trade & Border Crossings](#)

### Issue Overview

The steel and related iron ore industries are a vital component of the Great Lakes region's durable goods manufacturing cluster and are important to the national economy and defense capabilities. In recent years, the Great Lakes states have accounted for 70 percent of domestic steel production, almost all of the iron ore mining and taconite pellet production, and 50 percent of steel usage. The rising level of steel imports, however, has adversely affected domestic steel companies, resulting in job loss and bankruptcy. Further, every ton of imported steel replaces 1.3 tons of domestically-mined iron ore, jeopardizing the iron ore mining ranges of Minnesota and Michigan, and the U.S.-Flag Great Lakes fleet that depends on iron ore for more than 50 percent of its total float. Steel imports now account for about 20% of the U.S. market and an apparent world oversupply has also held prices of steel down, putting pressure on even low-cost producers. On June 22, 2001, the U.S. Administration launched a review of the steel import situation to determine if import increases have been substantial cause of serious injury to the domestic industry. Associated hearings in the Great Lakes states on the steel import/industry issue received considerable testimony about the seriousness of the situation.

### GLC Position

The Great Lakes Commission has identified the following six areas of public policy that have a bearing on the current status and future prospects of the integrated steel industry:

**Trade Policy:** The Commission supports a national policy that seeks an internationally-negotiated solution to the conditions that give rise to predatory trade practices in steel. The Commission also supports a policy that promotes continued revitalization of the U.S. steel industry. Specifically, trade and domestic policies should address these goals:

- Restoration of the U.S. industry to sustained, long-term profitability;
- Provision of a sufficient supply of competitive quality steel at competitive prices to U.S. steel customers;
- Minimization of the nation's steel trade deficit;
- Aid to steelworkers and their communities helping them adjust to structural changes in the industry; and
- Full enforcement of U.S. trade laws.

**Adjustment Assistance Policy:** The Commission urges its member states to develop or tailor existing adjustment assistance strategies to help workers and communities respond to, and manage, change flowing from the competitive realities facing the integrated steel industry. The Commission supports an assessment of the competitive and technological forces affecting the industry, the individual facilities in the region and the economic position of communities with integrated steel facilities. The Commission also supports the adaptive reuse of abandoned facilities, consistent with health, safety, and environmental standards.

**Tax and Investment Policy:** The Commission supports tax policies at the federal, state, and local levels that promote the capital formation and investment required for the domestic steel industry to be a competitively viable entity in the global marketplace. The Commission endorses federal tax policies providing appropriate incentives for research and development (R&D) that enhance international competitiveness. Further, the Commission feels state and local tax policies should be designed to encourage capital investment and modernization programs which are needed to close the competitive gap that exists between domestic and foreign steel producers.

**Research Policy:** The Commission urges the U.S. Congress and federal Administration to increase funding for iron and steel research at U.S. Bureau of Mines Laboratories. The Great Lakes states should also work to:

- Maximize the impact of those federal funds through coordination of state, industry, and university resources;
- Identify and access a pool of capital needed for larger, more capital intensive steel research projects;
- Identify opportunities for R&D and public/private partnerships to facilitate such research;
- Encourage the creation of steel industry research activities at universities within and around the region;
- Redirect the interests of, and support for, the nation's most qualified engineers from defense-related research to commercial applications;
- Ensure that research in manufacturing sectors such as steel is paramount in any national technology agenda;
- Encourage engineering education at the graduate level that will provide qualified R&D specialists; and
- Create appropriate public sector financial incentives encouraging steel industry investment in R&D.

**Regulatory Policy:** The Commission supports consistency of enforcement and regulatory policy, cooperation between U.S. EPA, state environmental regulatory agencies, and industry, and improved timeliness and administrative efficiency of the environmental permit process. The Commission supports waste minimization/management and recycling practices and use of energy efficient technologies when possible. The Commission supports funding strategies to assist in defraying the cost of pollution control and pollution reduction equipment and technologies.

**Interstate Cooperation:** The Great Lakes states agree to pursue a common agenda in the following areas: tracking of federal trade legislation and tax policy changes that will have an impact on the development of the steel industry and cooperative lobbying and information gathering on measures that involve federal regulation or legislation impacting the steel industry. In

addition to federal legislative initiatives, there are several issues states can work on together that will allow greater efficiency in the industry. The states can: identify industries that are large users of steel and review regulatory or other barriers to their growth in the Great Lakes region, look for ways for the steel industry and steel users to increase market share in the region, in the nation, and in world markets, and work on a reduction of input costs – such as transportation, power, and other major cost items – to the steel industry.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (October 2001): *Steel Trade and the Great Lakes Region*

Commission Report (1989): *Steel and The Great Lakes States: A Policy Statement for the Region*

### **Related Positions**

### **Issue Overview**

There is growing evidence that the impacts of climate change are already beginning to be observed and felt throughout the world including here in the Great Lakes region. Consideration of climate change frequently begins with the need for mitigation, i.e. the reduction of global level of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere to prevent further impacts. Adaptation has generally attracted less attention. However, as the negative impacts of climate change become visible across the world, the need to adapt to these changes becomes more obvious. Look no further than the floods in Iowa (June 2008), floods in Southern Wisconsin (2007 and June 2008), and to Louisiana following the four significant hurricanes of 2005, one of which destroyed more than 1800 lives in New Orleans in 2005, and it is obvious why state interest in adaptation is growing. Adaptation here refers to any activity that reduces the negative impacts of climate change on natural and human systems. Successful adaptation does not mean that negative impacts will not occur; only that their adverse repercussions will be reduced compared to no adaptation. More and more entities are now reflecting on the adaptation needs and adaptive capacity of their stakeholders in the face of important climate uncertainty and researching the best ways to induce and promote adaptation.

The variety of climate change repercussions call for highly diverse adaptation measures. For instance, lower water levels in the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River will have environmental as well as economic impacts in numerous sectors, each of which will require a specific coping strategy. Adaptation actions may involve, for example, behavioral changes; operational modifications; technological interventions; revised planning and investment practices, regulations and legislation.

### **GLC Position**

No current policy positions. Please refer to the issue briefing paper referenced below.

### **Policy Reference**

[Issue Briefing Paper](#) (June 2008): *Preparing for Climate Change in the Great Lakes Region*

### **Related Positions**

[Coastal Zone Management](#)

**INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION & COORDINATION**

### **Issue Overview**

An intensive program of multidisciplinary research is integral to the overall Great Lakes management effort. Growing emphasis among the management community on adaptive management and the use of an ecosystem approach has created an increasing need for scientific information and tools. Such information must encompass all aspects of the Great Lakes ecosystem pertinent to emerging problems, such as persistent toxic chemicals, nonpoint source pollutant loadings, invasive species, land use, and many others. Increasing complexity of the management effort also demands a commensurate increase in resources allocated to research. Unfortunately, large lake systems such as the Great Lakes have seen little sustained or systematic study of basic processes compared to the level of basic research activity focused on oceans. This is despite the fact that these large lake systems are ideal sites to advance basic understanding of ecosystem dynamics and, as a result, have broad applications for scientific inquiry and resource management. A concerted effort has been made by the Great Lakes Commission and other parties to promote equity in research among the world's large lakes and oceans through the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, in cooperation with the International Lakes Environment Committee, NOAA-sponsored workshops, Congressional testimony, and other means.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission urges Congress, the National Science Foundation, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and other relevant federal agencies and funding sources to fully recognize the stature of the Great Lakes as a freshwater inland sea. In so doing, these entities should place additional focus on, and funding for, the development and pursuit of Great Lakes ecosystem research in the interest of strengthening resource management, training scientists, and advancing restoration and protection efforts. Specifically, the Commission supports:

- Enhanced federal funding for Great Lakes research agencies and programs, commensurate with current and emerging needs;
- Coordination of the Great Lakes Science Vessels regarding program development and coordination, communication and information sharing, institutional and administrative requirements, and funding, advocacy and coalition-building; and
- Development of an agenda and annual prioritization of Great Lakes federal research efforts and needs by appropriate federal agencies in consultation with the Great Lakes states.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (April 2003): *Enhanced Research on the Freshwater Inland Seas*

Commission Action (October 1997): *Coordination and Management of Science Vessels on the Great Lakes*

Resolution (October 1983)

Resolution (May 1982)

### **Related Positions**

[Monitoring Coordination](#)  
[Information Management](#)

### **Issue Overview**

Systematic collection, assessment, and distribution of information regarding the condition of the Great Lakes ecosystem is critical to effectively managing its natural resources and supporting related economic and social activities. The institutions engaged in monitoring various aspects of the Great Lakes ecosystem include the Canadian and U.S. federal governments, state/provincial agencies, local and tribal governments, private institutions and citizen-led programs. Coordination and collaboration among these many institutions is critical for efficient and effective monitoring programs that provide needed information in an accurate and timely manner. Significant obstacles exist, however, as funding for government-led monitoring programs is frequently inadequate and funding for coordination of such activities is scarce. Further, citizen-led volunteer monitoring programs pose particular challenges regarding quality control and coordination across the basin. The result is inconsistent coverage and quality of information collection around the basin. This problem is magnified by gaps in reporting and communication protocols and by inconsistency in methodologies and standards.

Several initiatives have emerged in an attempt to facilitate coordination and consistency among monitoring activities in the Great Lakes basin:

- The State of the Lakes Ecosystem Conference (SOLEC) ([www.binational.net](http://www.binational.net)) has emerged as a regional cornerstone for developing, implementing and applying indicators for assessing status and trends of key components of the Great Lakes ecosystem.
- The U.S. Government Accountability Office has recommended the development of a monitoring system, integrated indicator development, and centralized regional coordination for the Great Lakes basin to track overall restoration progress.
- The Great Lakes Observing System (GLOS) ([www.glos.us](http://www.glos.us)) is the Great Lakes component of the national Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) which was formed in response to the 2004 *U.S. Ocean Action Plan*. GLOS aims to advance the quality, consistency, access and application of observations and monitoring information regarding the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River ecosystem.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission calls on Congress and federal agencies to maintain adequate resources for monitoring and information management programs that support vital environmental protection and resource management efforts in the Great Lakes Basin. The Commission endorses and shall promote efforts to enhance and coordinate monitoring programs, build additional capacity where needed, and highlight the contributions that monitoring programs make in the Great Lakes Basin. Specifically, the Commission supports:

- Authorization and appropriation of funds to implement the observing and monitoring system improvements for the Great Lakes called for by the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration;
- Development of the GLOS Regional Association as a key regional node in the IOOS initiative;
- Collaboration with the Lake Michigan Monitoring Coordination Council and other parties to establish a pilot volunteer monitoring network for Lake Michigan that can eventually be expanded to the other Great Lakes; and
- A binational conference to assess ecosystem monitoring in the Great Lakes Basin, enhance and coordinate existing programs, evaluate monitoring information needed to support SOLEC indicators, and identify gaps and unmet needs in regional monitoring efforts.

### **Policy Reference**

- [Resolution](#) (2005): *Congressional Authorization and Appropriations for the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS)*
- [Resolution](#) (December 2003): *Establishing a Regional Association for the Great Lakes Observing System*
- [Resolution](#) (May 2001): *Support for Effective Environmental Monitoring Programs in the Great Lakes Basin*
- [Resolution](#) (October 2000): *A Volunteer Monitoring Network for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence System*

### **Related Positions**

[Research Support & Coordination](#)  
[Information Management](#)

### **Issue Overview**

The Great Lakes Commission recognizes that strengthening the linkage between scientific information and public policy is a priority for the region. There are many institutional and policy barriers that can obstruct information sharing activities across the Great Lakes region. For information management activities to transcend such barriers, state, provincial, and federal agencies should participate in efforts to develop data and information management protocols and agreements that ensure consistency. Improved management and sharing of scientific information will ensure that policy-makers and stakeholders have access to the information and data that is needed to make sound decisions.

The regional Great Lakes Information Network (GLIN) is an Internet-based approach to meeting this communications need. GLIN provides a central place to look for information about the Great Lakes region and provides a valuable service by offering citizens broad access to the regional policy and science community. The continued success of this initiative will require enhanced federal funding to develop and maintain the necessary state/provincial network infrastructure and to build linkages between state-owned data and information repositories and the GLIN superstructure.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission encourages the Great Lakes states and provinces, and all Great Lakes-St. Lawrence agencies and organizations, to partner with GLIN to enhance their visibility on the Internet, as well as to work cooperatively toward standardizing decision-support tools that fully exploit available Internet resources. The Commission staff will seek to generate and negotiate formal data exchange agreements among the Great Lakes states and provinces, federal agencies, and other relevant parties. Specifically, the Commission

- Supports consolidation of groundwater data and information for ready access in an integrated basin-wide network to support the management of Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River water resources;
- Will pursue future opportunities to develop Great Lakes Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in partnership with other organizations (e.g., USACE, NOAA, USEPA, USGS, USFWS, Environment Canada and NGOs) working toward the development of a comprehensive "Great Lakes GIS Clearinghouse"; and
- Endorses and will help to implement the International Joint Commission's recommendation for a binational data and information policy between the two federal governments, in cooperation with other relevant agencies and organizations within and outside government.

The Commission also encourages its member states and provinces and its Observer agencies to use the Great Lakes Information Network (GLIN) as the nexus of a new-generation information and decision support framework. The Commission will enhance its ongoing efforts to coordinate data management and facilitate public education regarding beach closures through projects such as BeachCast, a centralized data repository of Great Lakes recreational water quality data available via GLIN.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (May 2004): *Enhanced Groundwater Monitoring and Research to Inform Management Decisions*

[Resolution](#) (April 2003): *Data Exchange Partnerships and Standardization of Decision Support Tools*

[Resolution](#) (October 2002): *10th anniversary of the Great Lakes Information Network (GLIN)*

[Resolution](#) (October 2002): *Beach Closures and Associated Water Quality Concerns*

[Resolution](#) (October 2000): *Binational Data and Information Management Policy*

[Resolution](#) (May 2000): *Promoting Data Sharing and Usage Among Great Lakes Organizations*

### **Related Positions**

[Research Support & Coordination](#)

[Monitoring Coordination](#)

[Public Education](#)



### **Issue Overview**

The Great Lakes Commission has identified Great Lakes environmental education and public involvement as a regional priority, recognizing education's central role in advancing the informed use, management and protection of the Great Lakes. The Commission has organized and contributed to many Great Lakes educational initiatives including co-founding the Great Lakes Environmental Education Center, providing research support, legislative documentation and publications on the spread of aquatic nuisance species, forming the Great Lakes communicators and educators network, and ultimately in developing the Great Lakes Information Network (GLIN). The Commission continues to lead educational efforts in the basin through its TEACH Great Lakes project which brings Great Lakes educational resources through the Internet for classroom use by teachers and students alike.

The Commission has also assisted in the development of a Great Lakes Environmental Atlas and Resource Book published by the U.S. EPA and Environment Canada. Hard copy and electronic versions of this atlas have had demonstrated benefits for the research, policy and management communities as well as for the general public.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission will continue to serve as a catalyst to promote and expand Great Lakes and environmental education in the Great Lakes region. Specifically, the Commission supports the development of a new Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Atlas (in hard copy, electronic format and a French version) that incorporates the latest available data, information and electronic technology in the interest of providing a management and information/education resource, including environmental, economic and social areas. The Great Lakes Commission will approach U.S. EPA, Environment Canada, interested states and provinces and other prospective parties in the interest of developing a proposal and securing the support and funding required for such an initiative.

### **Policy Reference**

Program Committee Action (March 2000)

[Resolution](#) (October 2000): *Great Lakes-St. Lawrence System Atlas*

### **Related Positions**

[Information Management](#)

### **Issue Overview**

The binational Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region has long-benefited from outstanding regional institutions dedicated to improving environmental health, economic well being, and quality of life. Four such publicly-funded, binational institutions (Great Lakes Commission, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, International Joint Commission, and Council of Great Lakes Governors) have both individually and collectively made substantial contributions to this region. Despite a history of coordination and cooperation, the Commissioners/principals of these institutions do not regularly convene to discuss and act on mutual interests. Such regular meetings would offer an excellent opportunity to discuss common interests and express resolve to work together.

Promoting the informed use, management and protection of the resources of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence System is a responsibility shared by multiple levels of government. State and provincial legislators have a primary stewardship role in securing a clean environment, healthy economy and high quality of life for residents within this system. Consistent and coordinated approaches in exercising this responsibility are critically important from one jurisdiction to the next. The Great Lakes Commission has noted an increased interest in opportunities for state and provincial legislative dialogue on Great Lakes-related issues.

A unified regional voice on critical public policy issues is essential for effectively advancing resource management, environmental protection, transportation, and sustainable development initiatives in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region. Informed public policy decision-making requires strong linkages between the research, policy, and management communities within the region.

### **GLC Position**

The Great Lakes Commission supports the formation of a "Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Forum" that will bring the Commission, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, International Joint Commission, and Council of Great Lakes Governors together for policy presentations, discussion and action on matters of common concern.

The Commission supports the establishment of a Great Lakes Legislative Forum to promote interaction between state and provincial legislators via periodic meetings, conventional and electronic correspondence and/or other means. The forum would allow state and provincial legislators to advance understanding, dialogue and collaborative action on issues affecting the environment, economy and quality of life of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin. The Commission will support and assist in the establishment and operation of the forum in consultation with the Council of State Governments and other relevant entities, such as the (Midwest) Legislative Conference of the Council of State Governments and its Midwest U.S./Canada Relations Committee. It will explore and pursue opportunities to enhance the role and participation of First Nations/tribal authorities in its programs and activities.

The Commission, as part of an overall strategy, will actively seek and pursue opportunities to sponsor Congressional/Gubernatorial tours and associated regional events on a regular basis. The Commission shall strive to build upon the initial awareness of Great Lakes issues that Congressional/Gubernatorial members gain from the tours and other regional events through sustained and targeted communication/advocacy efforts that engage the members on a continuing basis. The Commission shall orient such events toward stated priorities and Strategic Plan goals, and seek partners for co- sponsorship that share such priorities and goals.

### **Policy Reference**

[Resolution](#) (April 2003): *Establishment of a Great Lakes Legislative Forum*

[Resolution](#) (May 2002): *Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Forum*

[Resolution](#) (October 2001): *Advancing Commission/Congressional Linkages Through Regional Tours and Events*

[Resolution](#) (May 2000): *Promoting State / Provincial Legislative Dialogue*

[Resolution](#) (October 2000): *First Nations/Tribal Authorities and the Great Lakes Commission*

Proposed Resolutions (September 1999): *Declaration of Partnership for the 21st Century*

Resolution (October 1996): *Canadian Provincial Membership on the Great Lakes Commission*

### **Related Positions**