



# Fact Sheet

## The Great Lakes Compact

### Our Lakes, Our Future, Our Responsibility

#### A Valuable, but Vulnerable Resource

The Great Lakes are one of our country's most unique and precious resources, providing freshwater for 33 million people who live within the basin and supporting the region's ecosystem and economy.

The Great Lakes Basin contains nearly 20% of the earth's fresh surface water. It is the only freshwater system of its kind in size and ecological diversity.

The Great Lakes are essential to humans and wildlife alike, providing homes, food, recreation, and economic sustainability.

While the Great Lakes are a vast and valuable resource, they are not unlimited. Each year groundwater recharge, rainfall, and snowmelt replenish only about 1% in the basin. The other 99% is finite and non-renewable.

#### Our Lake Erie



Lake Erie generates \$10.7 billion a year to the Ohio economy in tourism and travel revenue, of which roughly \$3.7 billion comes from hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching.

Lake Erie is the shallowest, warmest, and most biologically productive of all the Great Lakes and produces more fish for human consumption than all the other Great Lakes combined.

Lake Erie is vitally important to Ohio's environment and economy.

The Lake is a center of commerce and industry, supporting agriculture, shipping, heavy manufacturing, and electricity generation.

It supplies drinking water to 11 million people, 3 million of whom live in Ohio, and supports more than a quarter of a million Ohio jobs.

Lake Erie generates \$10.1 billion a year to the Ohio economy in tourism and travel revenue. Roughly \$3.7 billion of that revenue is generated from hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching.

It is clear that Lake Erie is a resource worth protecting and improving, and that we need our water here at home to support our quality of life.

#### The Compact

In 2008, the Great Lakes – St Lawrence Basin Water Resources Compact (Compact) was ratified by the Great Lakes states and territories, passed by Congress, and signed into law. There is a companion agreement within the Canadian Provinces of Ontario and Quebec.

These agreements provide the most comprehensive water use protections for the Great Lakes in the last century.

The enforceability of the Compact is what sets this agreement apart from other Great Lakes agreements.

Photo: Bonnie Curless, 2004 "Life on Lake Erie" Award Winner



We must protect the Great Lakes ecosystem for our enjoyment and that of future generations.

## The Compact (con't)

For the first time in the Great Lakes basin, the Compact:

- considers the Great Lakes, their tributaries, and groundwater to be one ecosystem subject to the same environmental standard;
- establishes protection of the ecosystem and the economies that depend on the Great Lakes as a priority everywhere in the basin;
- ensures that every Great Lakes state and territory will have the same set of rational protections.

The Compact protects the Great Lakes from harm by implementing a strong and effective water management program. These agreements close the door on

exporting our Great Lakes waters by cargo tankers to the four corners of the world. They also put our own house in order by protecting us from unwise water use in the basin.

The Compact provides the region with an opportunity to address all water uses in a comprehensive and ground breaking way. The Compact would allow the Great Lakes region to maintain control over Great Lakes water in the face of growing demand from across the nation and the world.

The Compact guarantees the long-term protection and sound management of Great Lakes water, ensuring that they are protected for generations to come.

## Recommendation

Advances in science have allowed scientists to develop a model to estimate how much water can sustainably be withdrawn without jeopardizing our economic vitality, drinking water, and ability to reconnect with nature.

The Ohio General Assembly must now pass legislation to implement the programs required by the Compact. These include a permitting program for new or increased water withdrawals and consumptive uses, as well as a conservation program for all water users, including existing users.

Should the legislature adopt water use standards that are anything less than science-based, it will fail to fulfill the promise of the Compact and compromise the integrity and economic value of Lake Erie and Ohio's streams and ground water. The legislature must implement protections that are science-based rather than politics-based. Science is objective, rather than subjective.

For more information please contact Kristy Meyer, Director of Agricultural & Clean Water Programs, at (614) 487-7506 or [Kristy@theOEC.org](mailto:Kristy@theOEC.org).

For more information contact:

Ohio Environmental Council  
1207 Grandview Ave, Suite 201  
Columbus, Ohio 43212

tel (614) 487-7506  
fax (614) 487-7510  
e-mail [OEC@theOEC.org](mailto:OEC@theOEC.org)  
web [www.theOEC.org](http://www.theOEC.org)