



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – November 18, 2005  
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## **Proposed agreements to prevent Great Lakes water from being sold off to highest bidder Governor Taft led negotiations for U.S.**

(Columbus, Ohio)—The U.S. and Canada are on the verge of historic agreements to prevent the mass export of Great Lakes water by cargo tankers to the four corners of the world.

Negotiated between the eight Great Lakes governors and premiers of Ontario and Quebec, the draft agreements would:

- Create enforceable, binding compacts among the eight Great Lakes states and two Canadian provinces to control the use of Great Lakes water.
- Prohibit the diversion of water out of the Great Lakes drainage basin, except for small diversions to nearby communities suffering public supply shortages.
- Require water conservation plans throughout the basin.

The Great Lakes hold one fifth of the world's freshwater supply and 95% of the U.S. fresh surface water. Despite their vastness, they are a limited resource. Rainwater and snowmelt replenish only about one-percent of the lakes, rivers and underground aquifers that make up the Great Lakes basin.

"The Great Lakes are a practical treasure that we have been entrusted with to protect and restore," said Kristy Meyer, Outreach Coordinator for the Ohio Environmental Council. "Selling and exporting water from the Great Lakes to the highest bidder would be like selling off the Grand Canyon."

The U.S. Governors and Canadian Premiers are slated to sign the agreement on Dec. 13 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Ohio and each Great Lake state will have to adopt new laws, subject to approval by Congress, before the proposal could take effect in the U.S.

"We applaud Governor Taft for his leadership in achieving these precedent-setting protections. Now, we urge the Ohio General Assembly to seal the deal to keep Great Lakes water in the Great Lakes," said Kristy Meyer, Outreach Coordinator for the Ohio Environmental Council.

While hailing the agreement as a significant strengthening of mostly non-existent controls on foreign exports and domestic withdrawals, conservationists voiced disappointment that the bottled water industry and others succeeded in watering down the agreement. In particular, the proposed agreements stripped a provision to require that any water withdrawal project must result in a net "improvement" to the basin and weakened previously proposed standards on return flow.

"It is disappointing that the Council of Great Lakes Governors failed to insist that all withdrawal projects must result in a net 'improvement' to the Great Lakes as a condition of approval," said Meyer. "How, at the same time our region's leaders are asking Congress to invest billions of dollars in restoring the Great Lakes can they let this golden opportunity to further protect the lakes slip through their hands?"