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Western Lake Erie
WATERKEEPER®
Association
*Great Lakes' Warmest,
Shallowest, Fishiest Waters*



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President's Budget Benefits Ohio's People, Economy, and Lake Erie

Columbus, OH—The people, businesses, and communities of Ohio have much to gain if Congress funds a new \$475 million Obama Administration initiative to restore Lake Erie and the other Great Lakes, conservation leaders said today.

“President Obama’s budget includes a significant down payment on the multi-year effort to restore Lake Erie and revive the economy,” said Kristy Meyer, Director of Agricultural & Clean Water Programs for the Ohio Environmental Council. “We look forward to working with the Ohio’s Congressional delegation to fund this initiative, put people to work now, and restore our Great Lake and our economy.”

The Obama Administration unveiled the initiative as part of its budget announcement last week. Conservation groups briefed reporters on the issue today.

“The president’s budget benefits people, benefits our economy and benefits the Great Lakes,” said Marnie Urso, spokesperson for Audubon Ohio. “A Congressional investment in solutions that protect our drinking water, jobs and way of life will pay dividends for millions of people in Ohio and across the country.”

Ohio's Congressional delegation can play an important role in funding the Great Lakes restoration and economic recovery plan, with representation on federal appropriations committees, including Senator George Voinovich (R-OH) and Representatives Marcy Kaptur (D-Toledo), Steven LaTourette (R-Madison), and Tim Ryan (D-Niles).

“Ohio's public officials need to step up to the plate and fund Great Lakes restoration before the problems get worse and the solutions more costly,” said Rick Graham, Izaak Walton League of America – Ohio Division President. “We look forward to working with Ohio's Congressional leaders and the White House to advance an initiative that is clearly good for the economy and the environment.”

Conservation leaders are emphasizing the importance of addressing the threats posed by toxic contamination of the Lakes' sediments, destruction of wetlands and other natural habitat from poorly planned coastal development, and destructive aquatic invasive species that continue to invade the Lakes from ballast water from ocean-going ships. These are especially significant threats to Lake Erie and Ohio:

- Lake Erie is the shallowest, warmest, and most southerly Great Lake. It is the most biologically productive Great Lake, providing more fish for human consumption than the other four Great Lakes combined. It provides Ohio with more than \$10.7 billion in revenue annually from travel and tourism and supports more than a quarter of a million jobs. While water quality has come a long way since the Cuyahoga River caught fire near its confluence with Lake Erie in 1969, Lake Erie and the other Great Lakes continue to be threatened by sewage contamination, invasive species, toxic pollution and the loss of wetlands and other habitat.
- The International Joint Commission has designated four waterways that drain into Lake Erie as official Areas of Concern (AOC) because of contaminated sediment: Ashtabula River, at which contaminated sediments have been dredged from its bottom, the Cuyahoga River, the Black River watershed, and the Maumee River, which includes Swan and Otter Creeks and the Maumee Bay.
- The loss of wetlands—which filter harmful pollutants and help slow flood waters—is especially acute in Ohio, which has lost 90% of its wetlands—second most in the nation.
- Earlier this year, a USEPA report found that the Great Lakes ports most vulnerable to future introductions of destructive aquatic invasive species are the ports of Toledo, Ashtabula, and Sandusky.

According to the Brookings Institution, an investment of \$26 billion to restore the Great Lakes will lead to at least \$50 billion in economic benefit for the region, including \$2 - \$3 billion for the Cleveland area, alone.

“We need to make sure that the momentum being generated by the White House and U.S. Congress to restore the Great Lakes benefits the millions of people who depend on the Lakes for their jobs and way of life,” Sandy Bihn, Western Lake Erie WATERKEEPER Association. “We have solutions. It is time to use them.”

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