



DECIDING THE FATE OF THE GREAT LAKES

Restoration

The Great Lakes: A National Treasure

The Great Lakes hold 95 percent of the United States' available freshwater and supply drinking water for the 33 million U.S. citizens that live within the Great Lakes basin. They host a sport fishery with an estimated value of over \$7 billion annually. And the 10,900 miles of Great Lakes coastline is a valuable resource for recreation, tourism and economic development in the region.

But the Great Lakes are in Trouble

DESPITE PROGRESS MADE IN RECENT YEARS, THE Great Lakes face a number of critical threats. The problems are so serious and pressing that the health of this invaluable resource is in jeopardy. We must take action now to restore the Great Lakes by:

Closing the Door on Invasive Species

Invasive species are a growing and potentially devastating threat to the economy and natural resources of the Great Lakes. Invasive species such as sea lampreys and zebra mussels prey upon and displace our native fish and wildlife, create a dangerous nuisance to boaters and anglers, and damage valuable lakeshore infrastructure. The costs to citizens and business from invasive species has been up to \$10 billion over the past decade.

Restoring Fish and Wildlife Habitat

Wetlands and coastal marshes provide critical habitat for fish and waterfowl, help clean our water via filtration, prevent erosion of soil and shorelines, and host a range of recreational opportunities. But this important habitat is disappearing - it is estimated that 70% of the wetlands in the basin have already been lost. We must provide resources to states and local communities to conserve and restore the places that fish and wildlife need.

Cleaning Up Contaminated Areas

Toxic pollution continues to enter the Great Lakes from a legacy of contaminated sites. Contaminated sediments have created a health hazard in our water – state and local authorities have issued 1,500 fish consumption advisories for the Great Lakes. We must clean up the 31 “toxic hotspots” (Areas of Concern identified by the International Joint Commission) and reclaim the health of our urban and industrial areas, ports, and river mouths. Estimates of the total cost of cleaning up these sites range as high as \$8 billion.



Jerry Dennis/MLUI

The Great Lakes states have over 10 million anglers, and sportfishing in the Great Lakes states produces over 100,000 jobs.

Federal Help is Needed to Restore the Great Lakes

The Great Lakes need a large-scale federal effort to restore this priceless national treasure. In April 2003 the General Accounting Office released a report that concluded that the federal government's efforts to protect the Great Lakes were in disarray and ineffective. The report concluded that government programs lacked coordination and a cohesive strategy, and suffered from limited funding. The report concluded that an effort of the magnitude needed to restore the Great Lakes would not succeed without a comprehensive strategy similar to those developed for other large ecosystem restoration efforts, such as the Florida Everglades or Chesapeake Bay.

Great Lakes Restoration Legislation Would Provide the Resources the Great Lakes Deserve

Congressional leaders have recognized the need for federal help. Bipartisan legislation has been introduced in both chambers (S. 508 "Great Lakes Environmental Restoration Act" and H.R. 792 "Great Lakes Restoration Financing Act of 2005") to provide improved coordination and greatly increased federal resources to protect and restore the Great Lakes. These bills would provide up to \$6 billion over 5 years for Great Lakes restoration efforts.



Governor Bob Taft of Ohio speaking at a Great Lakes conference and calling for passage of a Great Lakes restoration bill.

"I urge Congress to act quickly to enact the Great Lakes Restoration bill. Our lakes are in trouble, and our own future depends on how successfully we work together to restore them. We can and must harness the Great Lakes power to bring commerce to the regional and national economy for today's families, while safeguarding the ecosystem for future generations."

~Governor Taft of Ohio

Both bills provide that the regions' governors, mayors and state governments would be vested with authority and funding, in cooperation with the federal government, to develop, manage and implement the restoration effort.



ACTION STEPS

Tell Congress to act now to restore the Great Lakes.

Contact your Representative and Senator at 202-224-3121 and ask them to support H.R. 792 (Great Lakes Restoration Financing Act of 2005) and S. 508 (Great Lakes Environmental Restoration Act).

BASIN-WIDE PARTNERS

National Wildlife Federation

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"Restoring the greatness of the Great Lakes requires that governments at all levels work together on a fundamental restoration agenda - making sure beaches are safe for swimming, fish are safe for eating and water is safe for drinking. There must also be binational action to close the door to invasive species to keep the door open for commerce. A commitment to restoring the Great Lakes would be good news for anglers, hunters, boaters and everyone who drinks the water and depends on the lakes for jobs and recreation."

~Dennis Schornack
U.S. Section Chair, IJC