

HEALTHY LAKES, HEALTHY LIVES

photos courtesy of USEPA Great Lakes National Program office

A Plan for Action

The Great Lakes are essential to the economic and cultural identity of our region. Yet, the Great Lakes are plagued by raw sewage, invasive species and pollution.

For years, efforts to control these problems and restore the Lakes were stymied by a lack of funding and a clear plan of action. In 2005, the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration designed a strategy to restore and protect the Great Lakes, which resulted in a restoration plan. Bipartisan Federal legislation – the Great Lakes Collaboration Implementation Act – is being introduced to implement this plan’s highest restoration priorities. The bill deserves prompt passage to protect our economy, our health and our quality of life.

Opinion leaders from around the region support Great Lakes restoration

“The future of the Great Lakes is too important an issue to be put on the back burner. Local and regional leaders must put pressure on Washington to find the money needed to implement a restoration plan.”

The Chicago Sun-Times

“[The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Plan is] a vast improvement over wish lists of the past – and now everyone who loves the lakes can start keeping score.”

The Detroit Free Press

“[The Great Lakes restoration plan is] a bold environmental proposal that rivaled restoration of the Everglades.”

The Indianapolis Star

Blueprint for Restoration

The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy was released in December 2005. More than 1,500 public officials, citizens, business representatives, scientists, and conservationists crafted the plan, which enjoys broad support from the region's leaders, including all eight Great Lakes governors and dozens of mayors.

New Federal Bill

Now, U.S. Representatives Vern Ehlers (R-MI) and Rahm Emanuel (D-IL), along with Senators Carl Levin (D-MI) and George Voinovich (R-OH) are introducing a bill to implement the recommendations of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy. The Great Lakes Collaboration Implementation Act recognizes that investments are needed now to restore the Great Lakes and protect the economy, health, drinking water, and quality of life for the millions of people who depend on the Lakes.

Confronting the Threat

The new legislation offers solutions to the most pressing problems facing the lakes. It will:

- Halt new invasive species introductions by investing in research and prevention, such as requiring ocean-going ships to clean their ballast water.
- Stop raw sewage from contaminating beaches by providing states and cities with the resources to upgrade their water infrastructure.
- Reduce polluted run-off in our rivers and streams by protecting and restoring wetlands, which filter our water, prevent erosion, and control flooding.
- Clean up toxic harbors by removing toxic sediments.
- Address mercury pollution by creating the Great Lakes Mercury Stewardship Strategy grant program.
- Ensure that sound science will be used to evaluate the success of the restoration effort.
- Provide fiscal accountability through continuous review of the Great Lakes restoration plan and process.



Congressional Support Essential

Great Lakes restoration starts with strong support from the region's Congressional delegation for this legislation.

The region's Congressional members can show their support for the Great Lakes and the millions of people who rely on them by co-sponsoring the Great Lakes Collaboration Implementation Act. Congressmen and women can sign on to the bill today and push for it to become law.

We must act today, because every day we wait, the problems get worse, and the solution more costly. We have solutions. It is time to use them.

The Healthy Lakes, Healthy Lives campaign is directed by the Healing Our Waters®—Great Lakes Coalition. The coalition consists of more than 90 zoos, aquariums, museums, and hunting, fishing and environmental organizations representing millions of people, whose common goal is to restore and protect the Great Lakes. Formed in 2005 with support from the Wege Foundation, Joyce Foundation, and others, the Healing Our Waters®—Great Lakes Coalition reflects a growing public awareness about the urgent need to protect the Great Lakes.

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