

The GREAT LAKES

Healthy Lakes for Healthy Lives



We must invest in Great Lakes restoration today, or future generations may never experience the Lakes as we know them.

Photo by: University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh



The Great Lakes hold one fifth of the world's fresh water supply and currently provide drinking water to over 42 million people. Yet each day, our Lakes are damaged economically and ecologically by untreated sewage, toxic pollution and invasive species. Unless we invest in a solution today, the price we will pay tomorrow will be much higher and future generations may never experience the Lakes as we know them.

Fortunately there is a solution—you.

Urge state and national leaders to implement the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration, a comprehensive regional plan that dedicates funding to protect our drinking water, economic future and way of life. Log on to www.healthylakes.org to learn more and let your voice be heard.

The details:

Pollution from failing sewage treatment systems contributed to almost 3,000 days of Great Lakes beach closings and advisories in 2004. This problem will only get worse as our sewage systems continue to age. We must fix the plumbing, investing in the repair and upgrade of our sewage treatment plants.

Invasive species, like the zebra mussel, harm the lakes by throwing the ecosystem out of balance, putting the survival of native species and the region's \$6 billion sport fishery at risk. Their control costs the region an

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HEALTHY LAKES FOR HEALTHY LIVES

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Photo by: National Park Service

estimated \$5 billion annually. Prevention is the only cure for invasive species—we can easily prevent most invasive species from entering the lakes by requiring ocean-going freighters to treat their ballast water.

Over 100 years of toxic pollution, including PCBs, mercury and dioxin, fouls the bottom of many harbors and bays and contaminates Great Lakes fish. The Great Lakes Legacy Act has successfully cleaned up some of these sites, such as the Detroit River's Black Lagoon. Our experience shows that we can use modern technologies to safely remove and dispose of this toxic contamination, thus reducing human health risks and giving us fish that are safe to eat.

In some areas, sprawling development has destroyed more than 90 percent of our wetlands, affecting water quality and reducing critical habitat for fish, waterfowl, and other wildlife. Wetlands serve as the kidneys for the Great Lakes, filtering pollutants from our drinking water. We must restore critical wetlands where we can, and should protect those that are left.

Runoff from farm fields and city streets is a growing source of pollution to the Great Lakes, and may be contributing to the resurgence of the dead zone in Lake Erie. We must treat and control the manure from large animal factories, which can generate as much waste as a medium-sized city. Buffer strips, green roofs, rain gardens and other projects can greatly reduce the stormwater runoff from our urban areas.



Photo by: Jeffrey Potter

TAKE ACTION!

We have manageable solutions to all of these problems but we need your help!

- Urge your state and national leaders to implement the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration.
- Write a letter to the editor of your local paper in support of comprehensive Great Lakes restoration.
- Visit www.healthylakes.org. This is the website of the Healing Our Waters coalition, a coalition of more than 85 organizations working to protect and restore the Great Lakes.