



**2021
Annual
Report**

Lake Michigan

Board of Directors

Todd L. Ambs, Chair

Deputy Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (retired)

Mary Mertz, Vice Chair

Director, Ohio Department of Natural Resources

Sharon Jackson, Immediate Past Chair

Deputy General Counsel, Office of the Governor of Indiana

Loren Wobig

Director, Office of Water Resources, Illinois Department of Natural Resources

James Clift

Deputy Director, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy

Basil Seggos

Commissioner, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Basia Puszkas

Senior Manager, International Relations Policy Ontario Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs

Timothy J. Bruno

Chief, Office of the Great Lakes, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

Éric Marquis

Acting Québec Government Delegate in the Midwest, Government of Québec

Noah Roberts

Policy Analyst, Office of the Governor of Wisconsin

Board of Directors list is as of December 2021.

Cover photo: Kewaunee Pierhead Lighthouse on Lake Michigan in Kewaunee, Wisconsin. This page: The Baptism River where it meets Lake Superior at Tettegouche State Park in Silver Bay, Minnesota.



A Message from the Chair and Executive Director

IN 2021, the Great Lakes Commission (GLC) continued more than 65 years of work protecting the economic and ecological resilience of the region, despite challenges presented by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and global economic uncertainty.

We want to extend our gratitude to our Commissioners, Observers, partners and friends for their support over the past year. In this report, we will highlight some of the GLC's accomplishments in 2021 and look forward to 2022 and beyond.

Great Lakes Day goes virtual

In 2021, the evolving coronavirus pandemic led the GLC to organize and execute the first-ever virtual Great Lakes Day. In advance of the annual event, the GLC released its federal priorities, urging the Biden administration and Congress to invest in projects and programs that will protect the lakes and accelerate the national economic recovery. The GLC also led a binational coalition of regional agencies, legislators, local communities, tribes, and business, maritime and environmental groups in releasing shared priorities. On Great Lakes Day, the annual Congressional Breakfast Reception, organized by the GLC and the Northeast-Midwest Institute, featured remarks by the seven chairs of the Congressional Great Lakes Task Force and other regional leaders. More than 500 people registered for the event in a record turnout for the first online edition of the annual event.

Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program celebrates 30th anniversary

The Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program (formerly known as the Great Lakes Basin Program) celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2021. This partnership program between the GLC and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service places federal funds in the hands of local conservation practitioners across the Great Lakes basin. Over the last three decades, this program has prevented millions of pounds of phosphorus and tons of sediment from reaching the Great Lakes. The 2021 grant program awarded more than \$1.5 million to reduce runoff and improve water quality to nine tribal, state, and local governments and nonprofit organizations.

Third annual regional "Landing Blitz" targets invasive species

From June 25 to July 4, 2021, the GLC coordinated the third annual Great Lakes AIS Landing Blitz. This regional event is coordinated annually among state and provincial agencies and educates boaters on how to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS), ways to identify AIS, and how to report an AIS discovery. Each year hundreds of thousands of people across the basin are reached by online and in-person Blitz content, helping to protect the Great Lakes from AIS.

Action Plan sets the stage for growing the Great Lakes Blue Economy

In September 2021, the GLC and partners released an action plan recommending building blocks for growing the Great Lakes basin economy by leveraging the economic potential of the region's freshwater resources. Leaders from more than 50 Great Lakes agencies and organizations, convened by the GLC, developed the action plan as a roadmap for collective action and a challenge to regional decision-makers to take strategic action.

Renewed partnership strengthens federal-state coordination

At our 2021 Annual Meeting, the GLC signed a five-year memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to advance mutual goals for Great Lakes conservation, protection, sustainable use and development. This MOU recognizes the GLC's unique ability to ensure that scientific information is brought to policymakers and managers in a timely and effective manner, as well as engage its state and provincial membership to identify priority areas of scientific inquiry. We look forward to continuing our partnership with USGS over the next several years and beyond.

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Bluffer's Park and Beach at Scarborough Bluffs on Lake Ontario in Toronto, Ontario.

Collaboration leads to new resources on Great Lakes harmful algal blooms

The Great Lakes HABs Collaborative, coordinated by the GLC and supported through our partnership with USGS, produced several new resources in 2021, including a fact sheet that serves as a guide to roles different government agencies play with respect to harmful algal blooms, and another that identifies current gaps in our understanding of why and where HABs form and persist. The collaborative's work in 2022 will include a new series of fact sheets sharing the latest information on HABs and human health.

New habitat restoration projects break ground

In 2021, the GLC and federal, state and local partners embarked upon projects to restore fish and wildlife habitat at two sites in the Great Lakes basin.

In Illinois, the GLC and a team including Audubon Great Lakes, Forest Preserves of Cook County, the Illinois and Indiana Departments of Natural Resources, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Admin-

istration (NOAA) broke ground on a project that will restore more than 100 acres of wetlands by reconnecting Powderhorn Lake to Wolf Lake, and ultimately Lake Michigan. In addition to reconnecting water flow, this project will allow fish passage between the lakes, install water control structures to help prevent community flooding, and increase marsh habitat.

In Michigan, the GLC and NOAA partnered with the historic Ford House to launch a study of potential restoration in Ford Cove on Lake St. Clair. More than 99% of the lake's natural shoreline in Michigan's Macomb County has been altered, with only 2,140 linear feet of 31.5 miles remaining in natural condition. This project is anticipated to restore or enhance more than five acres of coastal marsh, eight acres of nearshore habitat, four acres of forested wetland, and one mile of shoreline, and increase resiliency to high water levels and heavy waves.

Advocacy efforts generate success in Washington, significant investments in Great Lakes infrastructure

In 2021, the GLC both passed a resolution encouraging the U.S. Congress and Biden administration to invest in Great Lakes infrastructure, and led a coalition of regional agencies, legislators, mayors, and business and environmental groups in urging Congressional leaders to include key Great Lakes priorities in upcoming legislation.

In December, we celebrated historic investment in longstanding GLC and regional priorities through passage of the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The final legislation included \$1 billion for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, which has funded more than 5,000 projects across the Great Lakes since 2010. These projects have cleaned up toxic contamination, restored wetlands, prevented the spread of aquatic invasive species and more. They also produce a substantial return on investment, with a 2018 GLC study showing every dollar spent generating an estimated \$3.35 in additional economic activity.

The GLC will continue its work to advocate for Great Lakes priorities in upcoming legislation, including investments in climate resiliency and Great Lakes icebreaking capacity.

GLC initiates planning for 2022 and beyond

The GLC's current strategic plan expires in 2022 and we recently began our planning process for the next five years. This process will allow us to establish the status of important issues, identify new priorities, and ensure we are fulfilling our unique role in the region.

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Cleveland, Ohio.



As we consider the universe of historic, current and new issues for the GLC, and the strategic value we have the ability to contribute over the next five years, we also want to consider how we best accomplish that work by partnering with others to realize our shared goals. In our next strategic plan, we will look to build new partnerships, strengthen existing collaborations, and expand our engagement efforts.

We encourage our Observers and partners to engage with us we work through this strategic planning process. Your support and partnership are critical to protecting the Great Lakes for generations to come.

In 2022 and beyond, we look forward to working with you to ensure the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River support a healthy environment, vibrant economy and high quality of life for all people and communities in the region.



Todd L. Ambs, Chair



Erika S. Jensen, Executive Director



Lake Erie

Financials

Overall, the GLC continues to effectively manage its general, restricted and cash reserve funds to achieve the agency's goals and objectives. These figures were confirmed by an independent audit, which is conducted each year to examine the GLC's financial operations.

Fiscal Year 2021

The Great Lakes Commission concluded FY2021 in sound financial condition, with total revenues of \$15.34 million. Total revenues exceeded expenses by 2.23%. The 2021 fiscal year ended June 30, 2021.

Revenues

Grants and contracts	\$ 14,558,421	94.91%
State contributions	688,000	4.49%
Meetings, publications, misc.	14,029	0.09%
Interest income	5,211	0.03%
Change in fair value of investments	74,171	0.48%
TOTAL	\$ 15,339,832	

Expenses

Grants and contracts	\$ 12,721,778	84.83%
Personnel	1,869,620	12.47%
Office operations	359,200	2.40%
Communication	36,009	0.24%
Program activities	9,018	0.06%
Travel	1,865	0.01%
TOTAL	\$ 14,997,490	
Change in net position	\$ 342,342	2.23%



Cargo ship on the St. Lawrence River near Brockville, Ontario.

St. Lawrence River

Commissioners and Alternates

As of December 2021.
Delegation chairs are in bold.

Illinois

- Loren Wobig**, Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources
- Stephanie Comer, Comer Family Foundation
- John J. Kim, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
- Yu-Feng Forrest Lin, Illinois Water Resources Center, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- Josina Morita, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Indiana

- Sharon Jackson**, Office of the Governor of Indiana
- Steven A. Fisher, American Great Lakes Ports Association
- Kay L. Nelson, Northwest Indiana Forum
- Jody W. Peacock, Ports of Indiana
- Bruno Pigott, Indiana Dept. of Environmental Management

Indiana Alternates

- Chris Smith, Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources

Michigan

- James Clift**, Michigan Dept. of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy
- Hon. Candice Miller, Macomb County Public Works
- Hon. Dana Nessel, Michigan Attorney General
- Marc E. Smith, National Wildlife Federation
- Hon. Rick Snyder

Michigan Alternates

- Kara Cook, Office of the Governor of Michigan
- S. Peter Manning, Michigan Dept. of the Attorney General
- Jennifer McKay, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council

Minnesota

- Hon. Ann Rest, State Senator
- Hon. Carrie Ruud, State Senator
- Hon. Jennifer Schultz, State Representative
- Hon. Paul Torkelson, State Representative

Minnesota Alternates

- Katrina Kessler, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- Deb DeLuca, Duluth Seaway Port Authority

New York

- Basil Seggos**, New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation
- James M. Tierney, New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation
- Donald E. Zelazny, New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation

New York Alternates

- Sean Mahar, New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation
- Eileen Murphy, New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation

Ohio

- Mary Mertz**, Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources
- Hon. Theresa Gavarone, State Senator
- Hon. Haraz N. Ghanbari, State Representative
- Laurie A. Stevenson, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
- James H. I. Weakley, Lake Carriers' Association

Ohio Alternates

- Mindy Bankey, Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources
- John D. Baker, International Longshoremen's Association
- Tiffani Kavalec, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
- Eric Peace, Lake Carriers' Association



Ontario

Basia Puszkar, Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs

Craig Brown, Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry

Ian Freeman, Ministry of Transportation

Kelly McAslan, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Chloe Stuart, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

Ontario Alternates

Tija Dirks, Ministry of Transportation

Thom Hagerty, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Jennifer Keyes, Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry

Ling Mark, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

Trevor Snyder, Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs

Pennsylvania

Timothy J. Bruno, Pennsylvania Dept. of Environmental Protection

Hon. Patrick J. Harkins, State Representative

Brenda Sandberg, Erie-Western Pennsylvania Port Authority

Pennsylvania Alternates

Aneca Y. Atkinson, Pennsylvania Dept. of Environmental Protection

Hon. Kathy Dahlkemper, Erie County Executive

Québec

Éric Marquis, Québec Government Office in Chicago

Vincent Gagnon-Lefebvre, Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques

Nicole Trépanier, Fednav Limited

Grégory Cloutier, Ministère des Transports

Québec Alternates

Geneviève Désy, Ministère des Transports

Guillaume Dubreuil, Groupe CSL

Jérôme Faivre, Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques

Kerith Iverson, Québec Government Office in Chicago

Frederic Lecomte, Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs

Marissa Gravel-Labelle, Ministère des Relations internationales et de la Francophonie

Wisconsin

Noah Roberts, Office of the Governor of Wisconsin

Todd L. Ambs, Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources (retired)

Melonee Montano, Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission

Wisconsin Alternates

Stephen G. Galarneau, Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources

Dean Haen, Port of Green Bay

GLC Staff

Left to right, back row: Don Leflouria Jr., Eric Brown, Tom Crane, Patrick Canniff, Ceci Weibert, Joe Bertram, Laura Andrews. Middle row: Kate Truitt, Meng Hu, Eric Ellis, Nicole Zacharda, Jill Estrada, Amanda Grimm, Ken Gibbons. Front row: Theresa Gruninger, Beth Wanamaker, Erika Jensen, Samantha Tank. Staff as of December 2021.

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Port Huron, Michigan

Lake Huron

About the Great Lakes Commission

The Great Lakes Commission is a binational government agency established in 1955 to protect the Great Lakes and the economies and ecosystems they support.

Its membership includes leaders from the eight U.S. states and two Canadian provinces in the Great Lakes basin. The GLC recommends policies and practices to balance the use, development, and conservation of the water resources of the Great Lakes and brings the region together to work on issues that no single community, state, province, or nation can tackle alone.



Great Lakes
Commission
des Grands Lacs



2022

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James Clift

Deputy Director, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy

Basil Seggos

Commissioner, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Chloe Stuart

Assistant Deputy Minister, Land and Water Division, Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

Timothy J. Bruno

Chief, Office of the Great Lakes, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

Mario Limoges

Québec Government Delegate in the Midwest, Government of Québec

Board of Directors list is as of December 2022.

Cover photo: Grand Haven South Pierhead Light on Lake Michigan in Grand Haven, Michigan. This page: Lake Michigan as seen from Grand Rapids, Michigan.



Highlights and Key Accomplishments

In 2022, the Great Lakes Commission (GLC) saw a return to in-person meetings, allowing our commissioners, partners, and staff to reconnect and strengthen relationships that provide the foundation for our work. We also celebrated the 50th anniversaries of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and Clean Water Act – landmark programs that have changed the way we manage and use our water resources. We extend our gratitude to our commissioners, observers, partners, and friends for their continued commitment to our work and their support. In this report, we highlight notable examples of GLC’s partnership-based work in 2022.

A Resilient Great Lakes Basin

Climate change, increased variability of lake levels, and other changing conditions continue to affect the people, places, economy, and environment of the Great Lakes basin. The effects of these changes include increased risks to water quality and supply, agriculture, maritime navigation, infrastructure, people and animals, shorelines and coastal zones, and existing restoration efforts.

Responding to this challenge, the GLC released a forward-looking plan to guide efforts to make the Great Lakes basin more resilient to the effects of climate change. *The Action Plan for a Resilient Great Lakes Basin* was approved at the 2022 Semiannual Meeting held in Green Bay, Wisconsin. The plan was developed by the GLC Standing Committee on Climate Resilience, which includes representatives of local, state, provincial and federal governments, as well as partners from the maritime and nonprofit sectors. It leverages existing regional efforts, as well as supports collaboration among jurisdictions to promote shared learning and create strategic partnerships that will lead to a more resilient and adaptive Great Lakes basin.

Clean and Safe Water

Through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act, the U.S. federal government is making unprecedented investments in improving water quality and providing safe drinking water for communities. The GLC developed two important resources to assist in the implementation of these programs and to help answer the critical question of how we are doing when it comes to protecting drinking water in the Great Lakes basin.

At the 2022 Annual Meeting, in Erie, Pennsylvania, the GLC approved a blueprint of priority approaches for improving water infrastructure in the basin. *Approaches for Improving Great Lakes Water Infrastructure: A Blueprint* was developed by a regional working group comprised of government and nongovernment representatives. It is intended to support federal and state elected officials, state agency staff, and local leaders seeking to advance water infrastructure projects. The GLC is now collecting success stories from water utilities, governments, and organizations that are putting blueprint approaches into practice.

Through Blue Accounting, the GLC is providing regional stakeholders information on ongoing work to implement source water protection plans, reduce lead in drinking water, and meet treatment requirements for water leaving community water supplies. This information was developed in collaboration with a work group that includes representatives of state, provincial, and federal governments, as well as the academic and nonprofit sectors.

The GLC is also working to reduce the runoff of nutrients that contribute to harmful algal blooms (HABs) in the Great Lakes basin, and helping to coordinate research and information about HABs. In 2022, the Great Lakes HABs Collaborative, coordinated by the GLC, published two fact sheets on human health effects of HABs, and released the HABs Research Mapper. This app will help the research community share their work and direct the water management community to projects of interest.

In 2022, the GLC concluded work on a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative-funded project called Conservation Kick. Conservation Kick developed a process for communities to invest in conservation practices to protect their sources of drinking water. These practices included wetland restoration, grassed waterways, and even a denitrifying bioreactor. Project funding was matched by participating communities in Indiana, New York, and Ohio. Through 10-year contracts between community “buyers” and agricultural “sellers,” it’s estimated that nearly 1,700 pounds of total phosphorus and 21,000 pounds of nitrogen will stay out of local waterways and the Great Lakes.

Through the longstanding Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program, the GLC awarded more than \$1.2 million to reduce the runoff of sediment, nutrients, and other pollutants into the Great Lakes and their tributaries. Each year, the program provides competitive grants to local, state, and tribal governments and nonprofit organizations to install erosion and nutrient control practices. The program

supports projects not typically funded by other federal cost-share programs, including innovative and unique practices.

Sustainable and Equitable Water Use

Since 1988, the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin jurisdictions have submitted water use data to the GLC, which compiles and summarizes these datasets into an annual report. The 2021 Annual Report of the Great Lakes Regional Water Use Database found that 37.5 billion gallons of water per day were withdrawn from the Great Lakes basin in 2021, representing about a 1% decrease from 2020 withdrawals. Thermoelectric power production, public water supply, and industrial use were the primary use sectors in 2021. Only 5% of the total reported water withdrawn was lost from the basin. Considering both consumptive use and diversions, the basin gained a total of 156 million gallons of water per day in 2021.

Safe and Reliable Waterways

The GLC continues to advocate for policies and funding that will support a safe and reliable maritime transportation system in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River. In 2022, the GLC passed resolutions supporting short-sea shipping and calling for increased icebreaking capacity in the Great Lakes. Also in 2022, Congress passed, and President Biden signed into law, legislation addressing several critical GLC priorities:

the National Defense Authorization Act included authorizations for continuing construction of the new Soo Lock, investments in Great Lakes icebreaking capacity, and an update to a 2007 economic impact study of Great Lakes recreational boating that was co-authored by the GLC.

Healthy Aquatic Ecosystems

The GLC maintains strong partnerships in the region to protect and restore aquatic ecosystems from the negative impacts of aquatic invasive species (AIS) and habitat degradation. For the fourth year in a row, hundreds of organizations across the region worked together to educate the public about AIS during the annual Great Lakes AIS Landing Blitz. This annual event is hosted by state and provincial agencies with the support of the GLC and partner organizations. Inspectors show boaters how to prevent the spread of AIS, ways to identify AIS, and how to report AIS. In 2022, the GLC also awarded more than \$65,000 in grants to Indigenous Nations and local organizations in the region to participate in the Landing Blitz. This was the first time that competitive grants were available to expand outreach and education efforts.

The GLC released a report on the second phase of its work to stop internet sales of AIS in the Great Lakes region. The Great Lakes Detector of Invasive Aquatics in Trade (GLDIATR), uses “web crawling” applications to track the online

sale of priority AIS and support the work of researchers, outreach coordinators, managers, and law enforcement officials. The GLC launched GLDIATR in 2010 and continues to work with partners to combat the trade of AIS over the internet.

Through an ongoing partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the GLC joined local, state, and federal partners to celebrate the groundbreaking of a significant restoration project along the coastline of the Niagara River in Buffalo, New York. The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park Shoreline and Aquatic Habitat Project will naturalize approximately 2,500 feet of the park’s failing seawall, significantly improve close to five acres of coastal wetland, and return two acres of historically filled lake bottom back to Lake Erie.

Work was also completed on a project to restore a former confined disposal site in the Maumee Area of Concern in Ohio. The site, known as Penn 7, was historically used for disposal of silt dredged from the Maumee’s shipping channel. A coalition of partners led by the GLC and NOAA restored more than 15 acres of wetland, improved nearly 60 acres of habitat, and better connected the site with the Maumee River. This work has increased birding and fishing opportunities, created a downtown green space, and improved water quality.

The Soo Locks on the St. Marys River in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan



Financials

Overall, the GLC continues to effectively manage its general, restricted and cash reserve funds to achieve the agency's goals and objectives. These figures were confirmed by an independent audit, which is conducted each year to examine the GLC's financial operations.

Success in Washington Sets the Stage for Progress in 2023

The efforts of the GLC and its partners once again led to a successful Great Lakes Day in 2022. In addition to the GLC's own set of priorities, the GLC led key regional groups in releasing a joint statement of priority actions for the sixteenth year in a row. While Great Lakes Day was once again held virtually in 2022, the GLC also coordinated and hosted a week of additional priority specific discussions for the first time. Topics included binational coordination, maritime transportation, aquatic invasive species, and coastal resiliency.

At the end of 2022, an omnibus spending bill was approved to fund the federal government for the remainder of the fiscal year. The legislation included funding for programs critical to the Great Lakes region, as well as a first-ever direct appropriation of \$3 million from the federal government to the GLC to enhance regional collaboration between the states and the federal government. Under the guidance of a new strategic plan adopted in early 2023, the GLC looks forward to utilizing this funding to expand state-federal collaboration, enhance regional coordination, and accelerate progress on priorities related to restoration, navigation, and resiliency.

The GLC remains committed to working with its many partners to ensure the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River support a healthy environment, vibrant economy, and high quality of life for all people and communities in the region. ■

The Thousand Islands region on the St. Lawrence River in Ontario

Fiscal Year 2022

The Great Lakes Commission concluded FY2022 in sound financial condition, with total revenues of \$7.058 million. Total revenues exceeded expenses by 1.76%. The 2022 fiscal year ended June 30, 2022.

Revenues

Grants and contracts	\$ 6,378,909	90.38%
State contributions	688,000	9.75%
Meetings, publications, misc.	19,206	0.27%
Interest income	4,112	0.06%
Change in fair value of investments	(32,438)	-0.46%

TOTAL **\$ 7,057,789**

Expenses

Grants and contracts	\$ 4,661,158	67.23%
Personnel	1,811,110	26.12%
Office operations	377,569	5.45%
Travel	30,271	0.44%
Communication	29,392	0.42%
Program activities	24,000	0.35%

TOTAL **\$ 6,933,500**

Change in net position **\$ 124,289** **1.76%**

Commissioners and Alternates

As of December 2022.

Delegation chairs are in bold.

Toronto, Ontario, on Lake Ontario

Illinois

Loren Wobig, Illinois

Dept. of Natural Resources

Stephanie Comer, Comer Family
Foundation

John J. Kim, Illinois Environmental
Protection Agency

Yu-Feng Forrest Lin, Illinois Water
Resources Center, University of Illinois
at Urbana-Champaign

Josina Morita, Cook County
Commissioner

Indiana

Sharon Jackson, Office of the
Governor of Indiana

Vanta Coda III, Ports of Indiana

Steven A. Fisher, American Great Lakes
Ports Association

Kay L. Nelson, Northwest Indiana Forum

Jody W. Peacock, Ports of Indiana

Brian Rockensuess, Indiana Dept.
of Environmental Management

Indiana Alternates

Ryan Mueller, Indiana Dept.
of Natural Resources

Chris Smith, Indiana Dept.
of Natural Resources

Michigan

James Clift, Michigan Dept. of
Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy

Hon. Candice Miller, Macomb County
Public Works

Hon. Dana Nessel, Michigan
Attorney General

Marc E. Smith, National Wildlife Federation

Hon. Rick Snyder

Michigan Alternates

Kara Cook, Office of the Governor
of Michigan

S. Peter Manning, Michigan Dept.
of the Attorney General

Jennifer McKay, Tip of the Mitt
Watershed Council

Minnesota

Hon. Ann Rest, State Senator

Hon. Carrie Ruud, State Senator

Hon. Jennifer Schultz,
State Representative

Hon. Paul Torkelson,
State Representative

Minnesota Alternates

Deb DeLuca, Duluth Seaway
Port Authority

Katrina Kessler, Minnesota
Pollution Control Agency

New York

Basil Seggos, New York State Dept.
of Environmental Conservation

Kisha Santiago-Martinez, New York
State Dept. of State

James M. Tierney, New York State Dept.
of Environmental Conservation

New York Alternates

Sean Mahar, New York State Dept.
of Environmental Conservation

Ohio

Mary Mertz, Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources

Hon. Haraz N. Ghanbari, State Representative

Hon. Theresa Gavarone, State Senator

Laurie A. Stevenson, Ohio Environmental
Protection Agency

James H. I. Weakley, Lake Carriers'
Association

Ohio Alternates

John D. Baker, International
Longshoremen's Association

Mindy Bankey, Ohio Dept. of Natural
Resources

Tiffani Kavalec, Ohio Environmental
Protection Agency

Debra DiCianna, Lake Carriers' Association

Ontario

Chloe Stuart, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

Craig Brown, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry

Tija Dirks, Ministry of Transportation

Kelly McAslan, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Basia Puskar, Ontario Cabinet Office

Ontario Alternates

Jennifer Keyes, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry

Leo Luong, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

Greg Malczewski, Ministry of Transportation

Carolyn O'Neill, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

Cale Selby, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Pennsylvania

Timothy J. Bruno, Pennsylvania Dept. of Environmental Protection

Hon. Patrick J. Harkins, State Representative

Québec

Mario Limoges, Québec Government Office in Chicago

Julie Bissonnette, Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs

Grégory Cloutier, Ministère des Transports

Vincent Gagnon-Lefebvre, Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques

Guillaume Dubreuil, Groupe CSL

Québec Alternates

Geneviève Désy, Ministère des Transports

Jérôme Faivre, Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques

Marissa Gravel-Labelle, Ministère des Relations internationales et de la Francophonie

Kerith Iverson, Québec Government Office in Chicago

Frederic Lecomte, Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs

Nicole Trépanier, Fednav Limited

Wisconsin

Todd L. Ambs, Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources (retired)

Jamie Kuhn, Office of the Governor of Wisconsin

Melonee Montano, Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission

Wisconsin Alternates

Stephen G. Galarneau, Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources

Dean Haen, Port of Green Bay

GLC Staff

Left to right, back row: Amanda Grimm, Tom Crane, Eric Brown, Connor Roessler, Eric Ellis, Joe Bertram, Don Leflouria Jr., Ceci Weibert, Laura Andrews. Front row: Jill Estrada, Theresa Gruninger, Erika Jensen, Kate Truitt, Nicole Zacharda, Hannah Reynolds, Meng Hu, James Polidori, Beth Wanamaker. Not pictured: Samantha Tank. Staff as of December 2022.

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Published May 2023



About the Great Lakes Commission

The Great Lakes Commission is a binational government agency established in 1955 to protect the Great Lakes and the economies and ecosystems they support.

Its membership includes leaders from the eight U.S. states and two Canadian provinces in the Great Lakes basin. The GLC recommends policies and practices to balance the use, development, and conservation of the water resources of the Great Lakes and brings the region together to work on issues that no single community, state, province, or nation can tackle alone.





Strategic Plan *for the* Great Lakes Commission

—— 2023 – 2027 ——

ADOPTED MARCH 2023

Authority

The Great Lakes Commission is an interstate compact agency established by the **Great Lakes Basin Compact of 1955** and legislative action by the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio and Wisconsin, and the commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The U.S. Congress gave its consent to the Compact in 1968. The Canadian provinces of Ontario and Québec joined the Commission as associate members via a Declaration of Partnership in 1999.

Article I of the Great Lakes Basin Compact created the Commission to implement its terms and requirements, as follows:

1. *To promote the orderly, integrated, and comprehensive development, use, and conservation of the water resources of the Great Lakes Basin.*
2. *To plan for the welfare and development of the water resources of the Basin as a whole as well as for those portions of the Basin which may have problems of special concern.*
3. *To make it possible for the states of the Basin and their people to derive the maximum benefit from utilization of public works, in the form of navigational aids or otherwise, which may exist or which may be constructed from time to time.*
4. *To advise in securing and maintaining a proper balance among industrial, commercial, agricultural, water supply, residential, recreational, and other legitimate uses of the water resources of the Basin.*

The Compact speaks to the need for a consultative and recommending body to assist its party states and provinces in managing Great Lakes water resources, while recognizing that party states have responsibility and authority, pursuant to state and federal law, to protect their waters and water dependent resources. The terms of the Compact consistently speak to the intertwining of beneficial uses with the conservation of water resources, and the need for an agency to advise on achieving sustainability and balance among multiple uses.

Vision

The Great Lakes Commission is a binational leader, collaborative partner, and trusted voice ensuring the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River and their watersheds are resilient to climate change and support a healthy environment, strong economies and communities, and high quality of life for current and future generations.

Mission

The Great Lakes Commission represents, advises, and assists its party states and provinces by fostering dialogue, developing consensus, facilitating collaboration, and speaking with a unified voice to advance collective interests to further a strong economy and healthy environment, and to achieve the balanced and sustainable use of Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin water resources.

Values

As an interstate agency, the Great Lakes Commission is guided by and serves the common interests of its party states and provinces. The Great Lakes Commission also gratefully acknowledges the Indigenous nations whose homelands are part of this region as the original stewards of the Great Lakes basin and whose stewardship efforts continue today. The following values set the standards to which the Commission aspires in carrying out its work in service to its party states and provinces.

- **Regional perspective:** We bring a regional perspective to federal, state, and provincial programs, policies, projects, and priorities.
- **Leadership:** We are ambassadors for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River region and serve as liaisons within and beyond the region.
- **Diversity and inclusivity:** We are inclusive and seek out diverse views through existing and new partnerships.
- **Collaboration and partnership:** We respectfully advance our goals in close coordination with the International Joint Commission, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, the Conference of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers, and continuous dialogue with other regional institutions and relevant entities.
- **Transparency:** We are open and transparent in carrying out our work.
- **Integrity:** We exhibit the highest levels of honesty, credibility, and accuracy in the information, recommendations, and perspectives that we convey.
- **Objectivity:** We are nonpartisan, balanced, and science-based in our work.
- **Sustainability:** We incorporate principles of sustainability and adaptive management in our work.
- **Equity:** We believe the Great Lakes are an unrivaled natural resource that should benefit all people and communities in the basin and future generations.

Services

The Great Lakes Commission is uniquely suited to serve its party states and provinces and the region in specific capacities as outlined in the Compact. Services provided by the Commission are central to how the agency works toward achieving its goals, fulfilling its mission, and advancing its vision for the region.

Facilitation and Consensus Building: The Commission facilitates, convenes, and participates in forums that address issues of interest to the parties. By serving as a trusted broker of information and research and facilitating dialogue among diverse perspectives, it helps build consensus on solutions to challenges and opportunities facing Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River water resources.

Policy Coordination and Advocacy: The Commission helps the parties speak with a common voice by coordinating, analyzing, advising, communicating, and advocating shared policy and funding priorities. The Commission also collaborates with other regional, national, and international organizations to advance common interests.

Information Management and Delivery: The Commission collects, integrates, and makes accessible high quality and unbiased data and information to enable the parties and others to develop sound policies, manage and adapt programs, and make informed decisions affecting the water resources of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River region.

Regional Program Management: The Commission secures resources and coordinates activities that address common interests of the parties and provides capacity to manage projects and administer funding to partners to advance shared goals.

Communications and Outreach: The Commission shares information that raises public awareness, supports effective decision-making, and promotes Great Lakes stewardship. The Commission maintains active, continuous communication with federal, state/provincial, Indigenous, and local governments, and other stakeholders.

Goals and Actions

The following goals articulate the outcomes the Commission seeks to advance in partnership with its party states and provinces and other entities. A series of actions are identified for each goal that reflect the projects and activities the Commission will undertake to work toward these goals and fulfill its mission over the five-year timeframe of its strategic plan.

Resilient Great Lakes Basin

Great Lakes basin communities, infrastructure, ecosystems, and the economy can withstand, adapt to, and recover from climate-related stressors and changing conditions to ensure equitable and inclusive social, economic, and environmental well-being across the basin.

<i>Priority Areas</i>	Actions
<i>Resiliency</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve as a coordinator and facilitate implementation of the <i>Action Plan for a Resilient Great Lakes Basin</i>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Convene regional forums and processes for sharing data, coordinating action, evaluating risks and challenges, and deploying strategies to advance and fund climate resilience in the Great Lakes basin ○ Develop a Blue Accounting issue to contribute to decision-making and measuring progress on climate resiliency ○ Develop and maintain a publicly available interactive resource library to highlight existing climate resilience knowledge, resources, and tools • Develop model policies and/or recommendations that advance best practices for sustainable and resilient coastlines across jurisdictional levels, including different shoreline management approaches and associated environmental and economic impacts • Support the states and the Army Corps of Engineers in their efforts to implement the Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study • Facilitate and advance opportunities to provide direct assistance to communities to plan, integrate, and implement projects and programs that build resiliency to the impacts of climate change, clean up and restore waterfront areas, upgrade and replace vulnerable infrastructure, provide recreation opportunities and foster economic development, and contribute to sustainability
<i>Science coordination</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In coordination with other regional partners, advance the development and implementation of an ecosystem based, long-term science and monitoring program for the Great Lakes that will improve the region’s capacity to better understand current conditions, forecast impacts and potential benefits of mitigation measures, predict challenges, and inform the region’s ability to respond to those challenges • In support of the Great Lakes Association of Science Ships (GLASS), convene annual Great Lakes science vessel coordination workshops that are designed to facilitate the exchange of ideas and improve science vessel operations across the Great Lakes

Clean and Safe Water

Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River water resources are protected from pollution and impacts from climate change and extreme weather; are accessible to people; provide high-quality drinking water; and are managed in a balanced, equitable, and sustainable manner for the benefit of current and future generations.

<i>Priority Areas</i>	Actions
<i>Drinking water</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance regional awareness and understanding of issues with access to safe drinking water and explore the data necessary to identify issues with drinking water access, with an emphasis on disadvantaged communities • Compile and share information on private well programs and policies across the region to better understand risks and challenges • Develop a common understanding of clean water and drinking water revolving fund program investments, priorities, and needs across the region and advocate for programs that provide grants for clean water infrastructure • Maintain Blue Accounting’s drinking water issue and develop additional metrics in support of established goals • Advance a binational community of practice or collaborative organized around Great Lakes groundwater and source water modeling, management, and policy • Facilitate information-exchange and support funding, policies, and programs to address established and emerging threats to water quality (e.g., PFAS)
<i>Harmful algal blooms</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene and facilitate the Great Lakes Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Collaborative to advance prevention and mitigation of algal blooms on the Great Lakes by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sharing information and best practices among states and provinces through Commission-sponsored forums and written materials ○ Identifying and sharing regional priorities with federal and other partners ○ Coordinating activities, including outreach and public awareness efforts, and facilitating coordinated action with the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement Annex 4 Subcommittee ○ Coordinating research efforts through symposia and an interdisciplinary work group to share methods and results ○ Facilitating impactful, continuous communication between researchers, policymakers, and funders through written materials and convenings ○ Advancing research to explore and validate new technologies for the prevention and treatment of algal blooms • In coordination with the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement Annex 4 Subcommittee, maintain Blue Accounting’s Lake Erie Algae issue to share data and track progress toward the regional commitment to reduce phosphorus in western Lake Erie by 40% by 2025

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<i>Nonpoint source pollution</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate implementation of projects and activities that reduce sediment and nutrient loads into Great Lakes basin waters through the Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program (GLSNRP) and ongoing partnerships with USDA’s NRCS, conservation districts, authorities, and agricultural interests • Pursue opportunities to provide assistance and support communities interested in green infrastructure and improving stormwater management practices using the former Green Infrastructure Champions and Great Lakes Stormwater Collaborative projects as models
<i>Environmental justice and equity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate and support information-sharing on equity and environmental justice efforts and resources for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River region • Provide information and promote equity in decision-making regarding water access and water use that is reflective of the Great Lakes region
<i>Emergency response</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide data and information to states and provinces to support planning and decision-making for emergency preparedness and response for oil and hazardous materials spills

Sustainable and Equitable Water Use

Communities, businesses, and agriculture sustainably leverage Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River water resources as assets to support strong economies and a high quality of life for all residents.

<i>Priority Areas</i>	Actions
<i>Water use</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In partnership with the Conference of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers, support decision-making and measure progress under the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement and Water Resources Compact by: compiling, interpreting, and disseminating consistent water withdrawal, diversion, and consumptive use information; supporting the cumulative impact assessment called for under the Compact and the Agreement; and providing information on regional trends and state and provincial programs, practices, and policies related to water use and conservation • Convene forums, facilitate studies, and disseminate information to support decision-making and increase understanding of forecasted future demand on Great Lakes water resources and associated risk and challenges, including anticipated impacts from climate change, changes in population, and shifts in agriculture and energy production

Safe and Reliable Waterways

Harbors and waterways support recreational uses and a Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River maritime transportation system that efficiently and sustainably moves goods and enhances the competitiveness of the region’s economy and international trade.

<i>Priority Areas</i>	Actions
<i>Navigation and maritime transportation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for federal polices and investments that support a sustainable and reliable Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River maritime transportation system, including: dredging to maintain authorized depths of channels and harbors and additional depth needed in critical areas; repairing and upgrading aging navigation infrastructure; ensuring adequate icebreaking capacity; developing sustainable strategies for managing dredged material; and supporting the development of technologies to improve the system’s environmental performance • Compile and disseminate data and information related to regional goals set by the <i>Strategy for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Maritime Transportation System</i> through Blue Accounting’s maritime transportation issue, including economic data and information • Facilitate mechanisms for identifying and coordinating best practices, harmonizing policies, and providing technical assistance on emerging opportunities within the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River maritime transportation system, such as cruise tourism, decarbonization, short-sea shipping, “smart” technology and data-sharing systems, and containerization
<i>Recreation and tourism</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update the 2007 Great Lakes recreational boating economic impact study in partnership with the Army Corps of Engineers and others • Advocate for programs, polices, and investments that support sustainable small harbors across the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River system • Support a comprehensive update to and marketing of the Great Lakes Circle Tour utilizing modern tools and technology and integrating current tourism industry practices

Healthy Aquatic Ecosystems

Aquatic ecosystems and habitats support diverse and healthy fish and wildlife populations, are protected from the negative impacts of aquatic invasive species and other stressors, and provide cultural and economic benefits to local communities.

<i>Priority Areas</i>	Actions
<i>Aquatic invasive species</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene and facilitate regional aquatic invasive species (AIS) forums to share information and best practices, identify regional priorities, and coordinate research, management, and outreach activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Administer the Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species as the primary forum for coordinating AIS prevention and control ○ Advance collaborative-based research and management of priority species that have negative impacts on the ecosystem and economy (e.g., Great Lakes Phragmites Collaborative, Invasive Mussel Collaborative, European Frog-bit Collaborative) ○ Coordinate regional action and identify best practices to address priority pathways of AIS introduction and spread • Conduct regional analyses to understand the policies and practices currently in place that contribute to AIS prevention and control, and opportunities to support regional harmonization efforts • Provide data and information to states and provinces to support planning and decision-making for early detection and response to new invasions • Compile and disseminate information on AIS with an increased risk of introduction/movement into the Great Lakes based on climate change projections • Maintain Blue Accounting’s AIS issue to compile and disseminate data and information on efforts to achieve regional prevention and control goals for AIS
<i>Coastal conservation and habitat restoration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage regional programs that restore and protect valuable habitat and water resources, such as NOAA-Commission Regional Partnerships, in coordination with the states, local communities, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, Indigenous nations, and federal partners • Support opportunities, initiatives, and investments that identify and prioritize coastal conservation and habitat restoration needs, share knowledge, and contribute to decision-making

Supporting Actions

The Commission recognizes that its work alone is not sufficient to achieve the goals of this strategic plan. To be successful, the Commission must actively build and maintain partnerships and ensure resources and capacity are in place to support implementation. The following actions are included to highlight additional ways the Commission will advance its work over the next five years.

<i>Priority Areas</i>	Actions
<i>Partnerships and capacity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with other water-related commissions in the U.S., Canada, and abroad to share information, exchange strategies, and advance common goals directed at solving problems affecting Great Lakes water resources • Participate in and support the implementation of the binational Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, including participation with annex subcommittees • Increase engagement with Indigenous nations in the Great Lakes basin through regular and proactive communication and facilitating participation in Commission initiatives • Facilitate a mutually beneficial Commission Observer program and expand participation in the program to include underrepresented communities • Pursue joint staffing arrangements with federal, state, provincial, and regional agencies to enhance Commission and state capacity and expertise • Establish MOUs with partner agencies to support ongoing collaboration to advance mutual goals and objectives • Establish fellowship or internship programs in partnership with other agencies and organizations to develop new talent and increase workforce diversity • Pursue opportunities to advance job growth and workforce development in the water sector, partnering with colleges and universities across the region
<i>Communications and advocacy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support continued funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), and increase utilization of state-federal partnerships in allocating GLRI funds • Support Canadian federal programs directed at Great Lakes restoration and protection • Pursue a U.S. congressional authorization and appropriation to support Commission operations and allow the agency to proactively respond to and address regional priorities that support the balanced use, development, and conservation of Great Lakes water resources • In coordination with partners, facilitate regional dialogue and forums on significant initiatives affecting the balanced use, development, and conservation of Great Lakes water resources • Facilitate studies to quantify the economic value of Great Lakes water resources, including the industries that rely on the Great Lakes, ecosystem services generated by the Great Lakes, and the return on investment from environmental restoration and water-related infrastructure improvements • Provide accessible information to increase public awareness and understanding of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River system and empower action through mechanisms including Blue Accounting and Great Lakes Daily News