Wildlife, people, and communities rely on clean, healthy water. The Great Lakes, Upper Mississippi River, Ohio River, Boundary waters and multitudes of smaller streams, rivers and wetlands are the life force for the health and economy of the comprehensive Great Lakes region. NWF’s Great Lakes Regional Center, covering Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin, is committed to being a uniting, effective voice for wildlife, people, and water. We continue to advocate for effective solutions to some of the most urgent threats to our drinking water, public health, recreation and way of life. We are working to protect fish and wildlife and our outdoor traditions, and to protect and improve the quality of life of people and communities who call this region home. We also work to ensure that the communities that have been most impacted by pollution and environmental harm are prioritized when it comes to implementing solutions.

These priorities reflect well-established needs and opportunities to strengthen protections for wildlife, safeguard public health, enhance economic vitality, and sustain our quality of life in the Great Lakes region. They enjoy long-standing and broad bi-partisan support among a diverse set of communities. We urge our congressional leaders to demonstrate their support for our region’s natural resources, and the people, businesses, and wildlife that depend on them.

NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION URGES CONGRESS AND THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION TO:

- Protect Our Natural Resources and Wildlife
- Safeguard Our Drinking Water
- Restore Watersheds
- Protect Public Lands and Wildlife
- Advance Climate Solutions and Resiliency
PROTECT OUR NATURAL RESOURCES AND WILDLIFE

Stop the Spread of Invasive Species

- Authorize the Brandon Road Project at full federal expense, including construction, operation, and maintenance, to help prevent the movement of invasive carp and other invasive species from the Mississippi River basin into the Great Lakes;
- Direct the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to finalize the Great Lakes & Mississippi River Interbasin Study to prevent invasive species transfer between the Mississippi River and Great Lakes; and
- Provide funding to assist in development of ballast water treatment technology that can be implemented by all vessels that operate in the Great Lakes to prevent non-native species from entering U.S. waters.

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Protect the Great Lakes from Harmful Algal Blooms

- Agricultural conservation programs must be directed towards nutrient management strategies that keep nutrients in the root zone and prevent runoff from farm fields;
- Increase funding for proven programs to reduce point and nonpoint source nutrient discharges, limit erosion, and protect and restore wetlands;
- Expand funding and technical support to help implement existing commitments and agreements relating to Lake Erie, and increase support to implement plans addressing harmful algal blooms for inland waters and across the Great Lakes.

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Securing Water and Wildlife Conservation through the Farm Bill

- Develop a strong conservation title in the 2023 Farm Bill that provides needed technical and financial assistance to enable farmers and ranchers to adopt practices that benefit fish, wildlife and water quality in the Great Lakes. In addition, the next Farm Bill needs to include provisions that expand soil carbon sequestration and other climate-benefiting conservation practices including adoption of best management practices like cover crops and promotion of climate resiliency efforts on working lands.

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SAFEGUARD OUR DRINKING WATER

Restoring and Strengthening the Clean Water Act

- Support the EPA's current Waters of the US rule that restores long standing protections for rivers and wetlands that many communities rely on for their drinking water and health. With so many communities living with unsafe water, we need to strengthen clean water protections, not weaken them.

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Improving Water Infrastructure and Affordability

- Increase funding under the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund to help improve drinking water and wastewater infrastructure in towns and cities, especially in communities that have been most impacted by pollution and environmental harm; and
- Support efforts to address water affordability, end water shut-offs, and promote workforce development and job training opportunities to ensure that local workers and businesses benefit from federal investments in restoration and protection.

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Protecting People and Wildlife From PFAS

- Support the reintroduction of the bi-partisan PFAS Action Act, which would require the EPA to determine whether cancer-causing PFAS chemicals should be designated as toxic pollutants under the Clean Water Act. Support an expedited issuance of a PFOS and PFOA federal drinking water standard;
- Support implementation of the EPA's PFAS Action Plan, and support efforts to improve monitoring, detection, and coordination between state and federal agencies to clean up PFAS pollution from former military bases (such as Wurtsmith Air Force Base in Michigan);
- Increase appropriations for federal agencies to conduct research for PFAS tissue sampling in fish and wildlife; and
- Support pilot projects of remedial options for farmers affected by PFAS contamination.

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RESTORE WATERSHEDS

Great Lakes Restoration
The Great Lakes encompass 95% of North America’s freshwater, over 40 million people rely on them for drinking water, and they are the foundation of the eight-state region’s economy and quality of life.
• Fully fund the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative at $425 million in fiscal year 2024 to continue environmental cleanup, reduce nutrient pollution that leads to harmful algal blooms, and protect the Great Lakes from invasive carp.

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Ohio River Restoration
The Ohio River is a working river that is home to more than 25 million people, many of whom depend on the river, its tributaries, wetlands and water resources as an economic engine, a source of drinking water, health, and a place of recreation, and jobs.

The National Wildlife Federation is leading a diverse workgroup to craft a restoration and protection action plan for the 14-state Ohio River basin ecosystem to address serious threats including sewage overflows, toxic pollution, mine waste, flooding, and runoff pollution. The science-based Ohio River restoration plan will be delivered to the U.S. Congress in 2023. The goal is to establish a federally funded restoration program for the Ohio River basin, similar to federal initiatives to restore the Great Lakes, and other iconic U.S. waters.

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Mississippi River Restoration
The Mississippi River, a cultural and national treasure, runs through 10 states, drains 41 percent of the continental United States and carries more water than any other American river. It provides drinking water, recreation, and a source of commerce for millions of people.
• Support the reintroduction of the Mississippi River Restoration and Resilience Initiative Act (MRRRI Act). This historic bill would establish the Mississippi River Restoration and Resilience Initiative aimed at protecting and restoring the ecological health and resilience of the Mississippi River for current and succeeding generations of Americans and for the fish and wildlife that rely on the Mississippi River and its floodplain.

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PROTECT PUBLIC LANDS AND WILDLIFE

Pass Recovering America’s Wildlife Act
• Support the reintroduction of the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act, RAWA. This bill would bring much-needed resources to wildlife professionals tasked with conserving the diversity of America’s native fish and wildlife species.

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Support the Boundary Waters Canoe Area
• Support the reintroduction of The Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Prevention Act. This bill would permanently protect the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Voyageurs National Park from dangerous mine waste.

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Strengthening Access to Public Lands and Water
• Support legislation that would improve and enhance equitable public access to hunt, fish and recreate on public land and waters.

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Advancing Solutions to Chronic Wasting Disease
• Fully fund the Chronic Wasting Disease Research and Management Act programs that will advance research and manage the spread of chronic wasting disease throughout our deer populations.

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ADVANCE CLIMATE SOLUTIONS AND RESILIENCE

**Remove Line 5 Oil Pipeline from the Great Lakes**

- Support the state of Michigan's authority and responsibility to protect the health of the Great Lakes, uphold public trust rights for all citizens, and uphold Tribal sovereignty from adverse resource impacts from oil and gas pipelines;
- Ensure the next reauthorization of the Pipeline Safety Act includes reforms that strengthen land and water rights for states, communities and Tribal nations. In addition, the reauthorization of the PIPES act should include strong and meaningful climate action.

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**Advance Climate Policies**

- Strengthen regulatory proposals to reduce the emissions of carbon and to improve public health including imposing stricter limits on methane pollution from oil and gas facilities, establishing new CO2 emissions limits from power plants and vehicles, setting revised, more protective standards for particulate matter (soot) pollution, and creating a new rule limiting mercury pollution from power plants; and
- Ensure climate and clean-energy investments are implemented effectively and equitably, and benefit both wildlife and people – particularly the most climate-vulnerable communities. Make additional investments and establish policies to help disenfranchised, rural, and fossil fuel-intensive communities build inclusive economies and remove ongoing threats to people and wildlife including funding for reclamation for modern-era mine lands.

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**Strengthen Coastal Resiliency**

- Expedite the release of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study to develop a collaborative, risk-based decision framework that identifies opportunities to improve coastal resilience in the Great Lakes region; and
- Increase funding for federal forecasting and modeling of lake level variability, extreme storm events, precipitation and flooding that are unique to the Great Lakes.

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