

NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION'S 2024 Great Lakes Federal Priorities



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 unifying, effective voice for wildlife, people, and water. 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 Regional Water Resources

Protect Public Lands and Wildlife

Advance Climate Solutions and Resiliency



**NATIONAL
WILDLIFE
FEDERATION**

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 in the 2024 Water Resources Development Act to help prevent the movement of invasive carp and other invasive species between the Mississippi River basin and the Great Lakes; and
- Provide funding for the development of ballast water treatment technology—applicable to all vessels operating in the Great Lakes—to prevent the entry of non-native species into U.S. waters.

Secure Water and Wildlife Conservation through the Farm Bill

- Pass a 2024 Farm Bill that protects IRA climate-smart conservation funding and bolsters robust conservation programs, facilitating farmers' and ranchers' adoption of practices benefiting fish, wildlife, and water quality in the Great Lakes; and
- Incorporate provisions expanding soil carbon sequestration and other climate-friendly conservation practices such as promoting the adoption of cover crops and enhancing climate resilience efforts on working lands.



SAFEGUARD OUR DRINKING WATER

Improve 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.

Protect People and Wildlife From PFAS

- Support passage 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 the bi-partisan Relief for Farmers Hit with PFAS Act, which would establish a USDA program to help farmers address PFAS contamination through testing, compensation for contaminated land, and researching and implementing remediation strategies for contaminated farmland.

RESTORE REGIONAL WATER RESOURCES

Great Lakes Restoration

- Fully fund the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative at \$425 million in fiscal year 2024. This should be in addition to the supplemental \$200 million for FY 2025 in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA);
- Support the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2024 that would reauthorize GLRI at \$500 million per year for fiscal years 2027 to 2031; and
- Support measures to address microplastics, which threaten Great Lakes drinking water, wildlife, and communities, and businesses.

Ohio River Restoration

- Join the Ohio River Congressional Caucus and help make Ohio River restoration a national priority. Collaborate with conservation groups in crafting a plan to protect and restore the waters of the 14-state Ohio River Basin; and
- Establish a federally funded restoration program for the Basin, similar to initiatives to restore the Great Lakes, Chesapeake Bay, and other iconic U.S. waters.

Mississippi River Restoration

- Cosponsor HR 7289 & S. 3754, the Mississippi River Restoration and Resilience Initiative Act (MRRRI Act), which 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 future generations of people, as well as for the fish and wildlife that rely on the Mississippi River and its floodplain.

Protect the Great Lakes from Harmful Algal Blooms

- Direct agricultural conservation programs toward 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; and
- Expand funding and technical support to effectively implement existing commitments and agreements concerning Lake Erie, while also bolstering support to implement plans addressing harmful algal blooms for inland waters and across the Great Lakes.



Restore and Strengthen the Clean Water Act

- Support initiatives aimed at restoring and reinforcing long-standing protections for our water resources, notably the Clean Water Act of 2023, which seeks to reinstate the historical breadth of federal protections for our rivers, streams, and wetlands, which initially were established with bipartisan backing and upheld for decades, but have been significantly diminished as a result of the Supreme Court case, *Sackett v. EPA*.

PROTECT PUBLIC LANDS AND WILDLIFE

Pass Recovering America's Wildlife Act

- Support dedicated funding for wildlife conservation through passage of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA), bringing much-needed resources to conserve the diversity of America's native fish and wildlife species.

Support the Boundary Waters Canoe Area

- Support the reintroduction of The Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Prevention Act in order to permanently protect the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Voyageurs National Park from dangerous mine waste.

Strengthen Access to Public Lands and Water

- Support legislation to improve and enhance equitable public access to hunt, fish and recreate on public land and waters.

Advance Solutions to Chronic Wasting Disease

- Fully fund the Chronic Wasting Disease Research and Management Act programs, which will advance research and manage the spread of chronic wasting disease throughout our deer populations.

ADVANCE CLIMATE SOLUTIONS AND RESILIENCY

Remove Line 5 Oil Pipeline from the Great Lakes

- Urge the Biden administration to support the Bad River Band's sovereign right to control its land against illegal trespass of the Line 5 pipeline;
- Support the state of Michigan's authority and responsibility to protect the health of the Great Lakes;
- Urge the US Army Corps of Engineers to conduct a more robust Environmental Impact Study of Enbridge's alternatives to continue operating Line 5; and
- Reject the assertions by Enbridge and Canada suggesting that the 1977 Pipeline Transit Treaty supersedes the Tribal treaty rights with the United States. Allowing such a claim to advance poses a serious risk to all state and Tribal sovereignty.

Advance Climate Policies

- Strengthen regulatory proposals by imposing stricter limits on methane pollution from oil and gas facilities, establishing new CO2 emissions limits from power plants and vehicles, revising standards for particulate matter (soot) pollution, and creating a new rule limiting mercury pollution from power plants to reduce carbon emissions and improve public health; and
- Ensure effective and equitable implementation of climate and clean-energy investments, benefiting both wildlife and people, especially in the most climate-vulnerable communities. Additionally, make further investments and establish policies to assist disenfranchised, rural, and fossil fuel-intensive communities in building inclusive economies and mitigating ongoing threats to people and wildlife, including reclamation of modern-era mine lands.

Strengthen Coastal Resiliency

- Continue to fund and advance the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study to develop a collaborative, risk-based decision framework, identifying opportunities to improve coastal resilience in the Great Lakes region; and
- Reject any proposed funding recessions of key Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) climate and resilience investments, ensuring federal coastal resilience programs dedicate funding for the Great Lakes region.



Together, with the support of Congress and the Biden Administration, we can create a Great Lakes region where fish and wildlife thrive; where all people have access to affordable, safe and clean water; and where everyone can connect with the outdoors and enjoy the abundant wildlife and wild places here in the Great Lakes region.

For more information, please contact Marc Smith, Policy Director, at msmith@nwf.org



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