



Coalition Gathers in Duluth to Maintain Progress on Great Lakes Restoration, Economic Recovery

Great Lakes Senior Advisor Cameron Davis, U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar, U.S. Rep. Jim Oberstar, Join Advocates at 5th Annual Restoration Conference

DULUTH, MINN. (Sept. 10)—Environmental, business and civic leaders are gathering at the 5th Annual Great Lakes Restoration Conference in Duluth, Minn., Sept. 10-12, in the final push for Congressional action on a \$475 million Great Lakes restoration initiative—the culmination of a year in which the restoration and protection of the lakes has taken quantum leaps forward.

“The successes over the past year to restore the Great Lakes and revive the economy are significant, and we’ve got to keep moving forward,” said **Jeff Skelding, campaign director for the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition**, sponsor of the conference. “The serious threats to the Great Lakes demand sustained action to protect our drinking water, jobs, public health and way of life. We know that action will benefit the region economically, while delay will make the problems worse and the solutions more costly.”

Cameron Davis, senior advisor to the administrator at the U.S. EPA, U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), and U.S. Rep. Jim Oberstar (D-Minn.) will address the conference—the largest gathering of Great Lakes advocates, elected officials and business leaders.

Conference attendees will focus on how an ambitious \$475 million Great Lakes restoration initiative—likely to pass the U.S. Congress this fall—can be invested to provide the maximum benefit to the largest fresh-water resource in the United States.

“Our goal is to get the biggest Great Lakes restoration bang for the buck,” said Skelding. “We want to make sure that federal funds are invested wisely and that successes are relayed back to decision-makers in Washington, D.C., so that our nation’s investment in Great Lakes restoration continues to benefit, year after year, the lakes and the millions of people who depend on them for their jobs, drinking water, and way of life.”

Proposed by President Barack Obama in his inaugural budget, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative invests in solutions to clean up contaminated sediments that threaten public health, stop invasive species that harm the economy and restore habitat that is the foundation of the outdoor recreation industry. The initiative has passed the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate appropriations committee. The Senate is expected to take up the bill soon.

Congressional action to fund the initiative marks the most recent progress to restore the Great Lakes. Over the past year, Lakes advocates have won a number of victories, including:

- Securing a campaign commitment of \$5 billion to restore the Great Lakes from candidate Barack Obama—precursor to the unprecedented \$475 Great Lakes Restoration Initiative President Obama proposed in his first White House budget;
- Passing historic water compact that prevents diversion of Great Lakes water outside the region and encourages wise water management in the region;
- Winning more than \$1 billion in the economic recovery package to improve sewers in the eight-state region; and,
- Re-authorizing the Great Lakes Legacy Act to clean up toxic sediments.

The accomplishments stem from a sustained region-wide push from environmental, business, industry and civic leaders—all of whom realize the tremendous economic importance of the Great Lakes.

The Brookings Institution estimates that restoring the Great Lakes will generate at least \$2 for every \$1 investment—at least \$50 billion in economic benefit to the eight-state region of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Yet, the world's largest surface freshwater resource remains plagued by serious problems such as sewage contamination, invasive species, toxic pollution and habitat destruction.

The goal of the conference—whose theme is “Fulfilling the Promise: Moving Forward to Restore the Great Lakes and Revitalize the Economy”—is to build on the successful collaboration with the U.S. Congress and White House.

“It is imperative that Great Lakes restoration and economic recovery continue to advance in the halls of Congress and the White House,” said Skelding. “Now is not the time to rest—but to roll up our sleeves and restore this national fresh-water resource that is the foundation of the region's economy and way of life.”

The Healthy Lakes, Healthy Lives Campaign is directed by the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition. The coalition is co-chaired by the National Wildlife Federation and consists of more than 100 environmental, conservation, outdoor recreation organizations, zoos, aquariums and museums representing millions of people, whose common goal is to restore and protect the Great Lakes.

For more information, visit: <http://www.healthylakes.org>

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