



Coalition Reacts to Federal Great Lakes Restoration Plan

*Strong plan can benefit from clear action on invasive species,
take into account impacts of climate change*

ANN ARBOR, MICH. (August 20)—The Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition submitted comments yesterday in response to the U.S. EPA’s plan to address aquatic invasive species, toxic sediments, sewage contamination and other threats over the next five years. The plan will help guide the implementation of President Barack Obama’s new \$475 million Great Lakes restoration initiative.

“The EPA’s action plan will serve as a strong foundation for advancing Great Lakes restoration and economic recovery,” said **Jeff Skelding, campaign director for the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition**. “Our comments have one goal: To make a good plan better, so that we can restore the Great Lakes now before the problems get worse and more costly.”

The coalition applauded the plan for adhering to four principles it submitted to the EPA to guide the use of future Great Lakes restoration. These included:

- Use the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy (GLRC) to inform program funding.
- Supplement – not supplant – funding for existing Great Lakes programs.
- Ensure all State, local, Tribal, and non-governmental entities are involved in the new initiative in an open and transparent way.
- Improve coordination and collaboration among Federal agencies and between the Federal, State, local, Tribal, and Canadian Governments, colleges and universities, and non-governmental entities.

The Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition suggested several ways in which the action plan could be made stronger, including:

- Update the nearly 5-year-old Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to reflect current science, including impacts of climate change on the lakes.
- Include a decisive action plan on how to deal with the ongoing problem of aquatic invasive species introduced from ballast water of foreign ships.
- Bolster interim milestones for activities such as wetlands restoration.

The coalition also urged the EPA to incorporate recommendations from a paper, “Prescription for Great Lakes Ecosystem Protection and Restoration: Avoiding the Tipping Point of Irreversible Changes,” put forward by a pre-eminent group of scientists.

The paper recommended targeting restoration projects in critical areas; reducing region-wide threats, such as toxic pollution and nutrient-loading; and protecting healthy aquatic habitats from harm.

With the public comment period ending, the EPA's plan will be further developed with public input and grants may be distributed as early as December 2009.

The White House Great Lakes restoration initiative has passed the House of Representatives for the full \$475 million. The Senate appropriations committee has passed the plan with \$400 million in funding. The full Senate is expected to vote on the measure in the fall.

To read the coalition's comments, visit: <http://www.healthylakes.org/>

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.

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Contact:

Jordan Lubetkin, Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition 734-904-1589