



New Report Underscores Need for Congress to Fund Great Lakes Restoration

ANN ARBOR, MICH. (July 14)—The Great Lakes are being decimated by aquatic invasive species, remain contaminated from a legacy of toxic pollution, and will face increasing sewage management challenges in a warming climate, according to a new report by U.S and Canadian authorities.

“State of the Great Lakes 2009,” released by the U.S. EPA and Environment Canada, finds the overall health of the Great Lakes ecosystem as “mixed”—meaning the Lakes display both good and degraded features. Preventing toxic pollution has improved, for instance, while the clean-up of existing contaminated sites—so-called Areas of Concern—remain a problem.

Invasive species, according to the report, pose a dire threat to the lakes. The situation, states the report, was “poor,” meaning the ecosystem is “severely negatively impacted and it does not display even minimally acceptable conditions.” Further, the report labeled the threat of invasive species as “deteriorating.”

“This report clearly shows the need for Congress to act to restore the Great Lakes,” said **Jeff Skelding, campaign director for the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition**. “Toxic pollution, invasive species and climate change threaten not only our health and quality of life, but the region’s economy. The U.S. House and Senate can advance Great Lakes restoration and economic recovery by fully funding the \$475 million Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.”

President Obama this year introduced a \$475 million Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, which has been passed in Senate committee and the full House of Representatives.

Next week, the EPA will kick-off a series of public comment sessions in the Great Lakes states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin to examine the initiative. The hearing schedule is:

July 21, Milwaukee, Wis.
July 22, Chicago, Ill.
July 23, Merrillville, Ind.
July 27, Cleveland, Ohio
July 28, Erie, Pa.
July 29, Rochester, N.Y.
August 3, Lansing, Mich.

August 4, Duluth, Minn.

More information at: <http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/glri/index.html>

The initiative strives to clean up contaminated sediments which threaten public health; prevent the introduction of invasive species which cost the region at least \$200 million per year in damages and control costs; prevent run-off and other pollution responsible for beach closures; and restore habitat that is the foundation of the region's multi-billion-dollar outdoor recreational economy.

“The report is a warning,” said Skelding. “Unless we act now to restore the Lakes, the problems will get worse and solutions will get more costly. The good news is that we have solutions that Congress and the White House can implement now to protect our Great Lakes, drinking water, economy, and way of life. Fully funding the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative will be a shot in the arm for Lakes restoration and economic recovery.”

The U.S. and Canadian environmental agencies convene annually for the State of the Lakes Ecosystem Conference to assemble independent, science-based reporting on the state of the health of the Great Lakes basin ecosystem. The summary and technical versions of this year's report are available at <http://www.epa.gov/solec/>.

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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