



Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition

December 15, 2016

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President-elect
721 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Dear President-Elect Trump:

On behalf of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, we respectfully submit the following Great Lakes Agenda for the first year of your Administration. The HOW Coalition consists of more than 145 environmental, conservation, outdoor recreation organizations, zoos, aquariums, and museums representing millions of people, whose common goal is to restore and protect the Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes are national treasures. They power the region's economy, provide drinking water to tens of millions of Americans, and promote a healthy, outdoor way of life. The Great Lakes are vital to the people, communities, and economy of the eight-state region of Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois, New York and Minnesota. Even with their majesty and size, the Great Lakes face serious threats from pollution to toxic algal blooms to the spread of invasive species.

Thankfully, the U.S. Congress and last two presidents have made Great Lakes restoration and protection a national priority. Due to federal investments, we have seen real progress towards restoring and protecting the Great Lakes. Thousands of projects across the basin are cleaning up toxic sediments, stopping the spread of invasive species, preventing pollution from running off farm fields and city streets and into our waterways, and ending sewer overflows. These successes would not have been possible without the support and bipartisan leadership of our Presidents. Even with these accomplishments, there is still much work to do, and we look forward to working with new leadership on the Great Lakes. We cannot afford to slow down; the longer we wait, the more difficult and expensive the solutions become.

We would appreciate a chance to talk with your staff more about these recommendations. Please let our Coalition's policy director, Chad Lord, know with whom to arrange such a meeting. He can be reached at (202) 454-3385 or clord@npca.org.

Sincerely,


Michael Carlson
Co-chair


Lynn McClure
Co-Chair


Joy Mulinex
Co-chair



Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition

GREAT LAKES AGENDA FOR PRESIDENT-ELECT DONALD TRUMP

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To keep Great Lakes restoration on track, the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition recommends the following steps for the first year of the Trump Administration.

The Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition consists of more than 145 environmental, conservation, outdoor recreation organizations, zoos, aquariums and museums representing millions of people, whose common goal is to restore and protect the Great Lakes. Learn more at www.healthylakes.org or follow us on Twitter @healthylakes.

Contact: Chad Lord, Policy Director, Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition
(202) 454-3385; clord@npca.org

Funding

Restoring and protecting the Great Lakes has taken bipartisan presidential leadership. President George W. Bush issued Executive Order 13340 in 2004 that improved coordination between federal agencies and consultation with non-federal stakeholders. President Barack Obama added his backing for the region's restoration agenda by creating the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in 2010. The GLRI is an innovative program that is a model for large, landscape-scale restoration. It ensures that the focus remains on the highest regional priorities that were identified through a large stakeholder process in 2005. It also provides an outlet for the United States to meet its obligations under the new Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement with Canada. The GLRI is a critical component towards ensuring that the goals the region sets for itself in both the agreement and comprehensive plan can be achieved.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) is successfully cleaning up rivers, restoring wetlands, and improving the water quality of the Great Lakes. The Trump Administration must **support at least \$300 million for Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in the FY2018 budget.** Additionally, the new Administration must maintain the GLRI's current focus in FY2018 on cleaning up Areas of Concern (AOCs), reducing polluted runoff from farm fields and city streets, and stopping the spread of aquatic and terrestrial invasive species. This work must be integrated into a comprehensive adaptive management framework where the results of past actions are analyzed and incorporated into future spending decisions. This includes increased research and monitoring where the data is made publically available so the public, states, Tribes, cities, and others can weigh in with federal agencies with their opinions on future priorities. We expect the new Administration to follow the pattern that GLRI funds supplement and not supplant restoration funds provided by other programs like those used for land acquisition, wetland restoration, or stormwater mitigation.

Some problems facing the Great Lakes are so pernicious and threatening that they require additional attention. **Asian carp** are such a threat. The new Administration **must fully fund actions** being undertaken by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Coast Guard, and the U.S. Geological Survey to keep all four species of Asian carp out of the Great Lakes. Working with states, Canadian provinces, and other regional organizations, the actions that require support include: 1) ongoing management activities outlined in 2016 Asian Carp Action Plan, 2) emergency preparedness to respond to new threats, 3) operation of the electric dispersal barriers outside of Chicago, 4) completion of the study examining modifications at the Brandon Road Lock and Dam to prevent Asian carp from moving beyond that point in the Illinois River, and 5) beginning the studies needed to prepare for addressing the two-way movement of species between the Mississippi River and Great Lakes.

The enormous cost of fixing other longstanding problems can also quickly overwhelm communities. **Repairing the nation's clean water and drinking water infrastructure** requires robust collaboration between the U.S. EPA, states, and communities if we are going to meet the \$655 billion need to maintain, upgrade, or replace aging and deteriorating water infrastructure over the next 20 years. The GLRI has never been used--and must not be used--to fill this gap. Providing robust resources in the new Administration's FY2018 budget for the **Clean Water State Revolving Fund**, the **Drinking Water State Revolving Fund**, and the **Water**

Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) help cities raise the funds needed to repair or upgrade water pipes and other infrastructure that are decades past their useful life. The same applies to any new comprehensive infrastructure plans that may be proposed. Some communities can not afford the loans or loan guarantees offered, however, by these programs so the new Administration should also support **options for grants** that target communities where the affordability of undertaking a big infrastructure project is impacted by a lack of an adequate tax base (such as in lower income areas) or population (such as in rural areas). The new Administration should **prioritize** these types of communities with funding and technical assistance, especially ones whose infrastructure threatens the public's health (such as lead contamination), to ensure all people have access to safe, affordable drinking water. Additionally, the new Administration must also maintain and look into expanding the Clean Water State Revolving Fund's **Green Project Reserve requirement**. It must work to **increase financing sustainable infrastructure** that supports communities trying to end stormwater runoff and build resilience in the face of climate change through the use of natural infrastructure, water efficiency and reuse (especially for industrial users), energy efficient equipment, and natural systems for mitigating storm surge.

Leadership

The new Administration must **continue the bipartisan tradition of presidential leadership by supporting the following**, which help implement all the Great Lakes restoration and protection activities taking place across a diverse region and among diverse federal departments and agencies:

- ✓ Maintain the federal Great Lakes Interagency Task Force established by E.O. 13340 and its Regional Working Group
- ✓ Maintain the Great Lakes Special Assistant to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator
- ✓ Maintain the Great Lakes Advisory Board at U.S. EPA
- ✓ Maintain the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee

Presidential defense of the **Clean Water Rule** is also required. This rule clarifies the scope of the Clean Water Act by clearly outlining what waters of the United States are covered. The waters of the Great Lakes Basin are interconnected; protecting upstream waterways helps keep waters downstream, such as the Great Lakes, free from pollution and toxic algae.

In addition, the new Administration must also be prepared to **provide robust oversight of the Domestic Action Plans (DAPs)** that are being prepared to outline which steps are **needed to achieve the 40 percent phosphorus reduction goal** for Lake Erie by 2025. This goal was agreed to by Canada and the United States under Annex IV of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement in 2016 and under the 2015 Western Basin of Lake Erie Collaborative Agreement between Ohio, Michigan, and Ontario. In particular, DAPs must at a minimum do the following:

- ✓ Ensure nutrient reduction programs are resulting in water quality improvements and achievement of nutrient reduction goals by targeting GLRI/Natural Resource Conservation Service (USDA) funds at the highest priority watersheds

- ✓ Invest in research and nutrient reduction modeling, establish a comprehensive monitoring network that is accessible to stakeholders, and share federal data to support use of a regional “Blue Accounting” system
- ✓ For accountability, interim benchmarks must be set and an annual reporting schedule established so everyone knows how close or far the plan is from reaching the 40 percent reduction goal. Regular, clear reporting gives time for the states, provinces, and federal governments to make adjustments in order to keep things on track

As a backstop, the new Administration must also **outline the actions triggered by failing to meet DAP benchmarks**. The Trump Administration must consider an array of options, including those that utilize Clean Water Act authorities that ultimately lead to the development of a western Lake Erie basin pollution-reduction plan and a tri-state watershed management implementation plan should monitoring or modeling show that reduction targets will not be met by 2025.

Accountability and Collaboration

For over a decade, people from across the Great Lakes region have **worked together to develop Great Lakes restoration priorities**. **Community-based collaboration** was the hallmark of the **Great Lakes Regional Collaboration**, which began in 2005 under President George W. Bush’s EPA. Thousands of individuals worked for a year on developing the region’s Great Lakes restoration blueprint. The same thing happened early under the GLRI when states, non-governmental organizations, watershed groups, and others came together to assemble workplans that the GLRI could support.

As implementation under the GLRI and Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement has proceeded, there has been a **drift away** from the initial emphasis on broad-based collaboration. The new Administration **must move Great Lakes restoration efforts back towards these roots** by reinvigorating stakeholder involvement and innovative collaborations. This can be achieved in a number of ways. Federal agencies must create more opportunities for the public to learn the results of the restoration activities happening around the region through webinars and workshops. Having learned more about the condition of the lakes, the public must also **have regular opportunities** to apply this knowledge and weigh in on future restoration priorities and projects. Although the agencies can organize these forums, it is best for agencies to **work through non-federal partners** like states and Tribes who are already doing this work, non-governmental organizations hosting annual conferences, and others doing this outreach. The federal agencies must also **apply inclusive public engagement requirements** on states so they too talk to the public when planning projects and creating Great Lakes restoration plans. Community engagement is **especially important in underserved communities** where people may not know about the GLRI or other Great Lakes restoration efforts, may not have been involved in their creation and/or implementation, or may not have been part of opportunities to create local benefits through these efforts. Finally, real engagement of stakeholders is not just listening to public opinion about priorities or transmitting information about how programs are being delivered. As priorities are established, agencies must coordinate with non-governmental organizations, coalitions, philanthropic partners, and the private sector so they can help identify

which groups may be able **to do the work** and help them **build the right capacity** so they can develop proposals, apply for project funding, and manage any grants awarded to them.

Community engagement will be especially important when the agencies develop the next generation of Great Lakes restoration planning. GLRI Action Plans guide federal investments. Planning for the next phase of work will accelerate under the new Administration. It is especially important as noted above that the next round of planning **ensure inclusion of all Great Lakes communities** in setting priorities and participating in implementation. Outreach in and with urban African-American and Latino/a communities, smaller rural towns, and tribal communities should receive special emphasis to ensure people who have often borne the brunt of pollution have an equitable opportunity to learn about and help build the benefits of the GLRI in their communities.

Last updated: December 15, 2016