



# ALLIANCE *for the* GREAT LAKES

## 2018 Federal Priorities

With the support of Congress, the Great Lakes region has made major progress to restore and protect the Great Lakes. But, much more remains to be done.

The Alliance for the Great Lakes has identified key federal priorities for 2018. The priorities outlined in this document can have an immediate positive impact on the Great Lakes and the people who call the region home.

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### Support Existing Invasive Species Regulations

Aquatic invasive species, such as zebra and quagga mussels, round goby, and spiny water flea, have caused irreparable harm to the Great Lakes. These species cause more than \$200 million in economic damage annually to the region.<sup>1</sup>

The single largest source of invasions over the last 30 years is ballast water discharged by oceangoing ships entering the Great Lakes. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are working in partnership to implement ballast water treatment standards designed to reduce the risk of invasion.

### **The Alliance opposes efforts to weaken ballast water standards such as the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act introduced in the 115<sup>th</sup> Session of Congress.**

We urge Members of Congress to oppose S. 168 and H.R. 1154 and any efforts to pass legislation containing the language of these bills. Currently, EPA establishes water quality standards and ensures the achievement of the goals of the Clean Water Act, while the USCG certifies ballast treatment technologies for safe and efficient operation and is on the front lines of vessel inspection. Oceangoing vessels should continue the practice of flushing ballast tanks with ocean water before entering the Great Lakes. This structure, which allows each agency to bring its unique strengths to this issue, should continue.

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<sup>1</sup> Ship-borne Nonindigenous Species Diminish Great Lakes Ecosystem Services. Rothlisberger, J.D., Finnoff, D.C., Cooke, R.M. et al. *Ecosystems* (2012) 15: 1. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10021-012-9522-6>

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## Prevent Asian Carp from Reaching the Great Lakes

Invasive Asian carp were first detected in the Illinois River in the 1990s and have moved steadily closer to Lake Michigan.<sup>2</sup> Asian carp larvae have been detected less than 50 miles from the lake.<sup>3</sup> In June 2017, a Silver Carp was found just nine miles from Lake Michigan.<sup>4</sup> The establishment of Asian carp and other new aquatic invasive species in the Great Lakes would be catastrophic for the region. Right now, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is completing a Feasibility Study on Brandon Road Lock and Dam at Joliet, Ill. The lock is a logical choke point location to install Asian carp control measures to keep the fish from moving closer to the lake. The Corps must complete this study on schedule in 2019 and move swiftly to construction of structural controls to keep Asian carp from advancing any further toward the Great Lakes.

Federal, state, and local agencies must also work together to implement a permanent two-way solution that stops all aquatic invasive species from moving between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins. Any long-term solution should be weighed against the most effective solution to achieve this goal, which is the restoration of the natural divide between the two waterways.

### The Alliance supports:

- **Completion of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Chief's Report for the GLMRIS - Brandon Road Study in January 2019, as originally outlined in the Corps' schedule for the study;**
- **Authorization of full federal funding from Congress for construction of structural measures at Brandon Road to prevent Asian carp from moving closer to Lake Michigan;**
- **Immediate implementation of navigation protocols to dislodge entrained fish from barge tows moving upbound (toward Lake Michigan) through the Brandon Road Lock<sup>5</sup>; and**

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<sup>2</sup> Asian Carp Invasion of the Upper Mississippi River System. Irons, Kevin S., Koel, Todd M., Ratcliff, Eric. USGS Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center (2000). Retrieved from [https://www.umesc.usgs.gov/reports\\_publications/psrs/psr\\_2000\\_05.html](https://www.umesc.usgs.gov/reports_publications/psrs/psr_2000_05.html)

<sup>3</sup> Update: Asian Carp Found in Marseilles Pool of Illinois River. Asian Carp Response in the Midwest, October 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.asiancarp.us/news/Map103015.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Silver Carp Found Nine Miles from Lake Michigan. Asian Carp Response in the Midwest, June 2017. Retrieved from <http://www.asiancarp.us/news/silvercarpcapture.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Preliminary Results of Fish-Barge Interactions at the Electric Dispersal Barrier in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - Midwest Region. December 2013. Retrieved from <https://www.fws.gov/midwest/fisheries/carterville/documents/barge.pdf>

- **The Corps investigating additional control technologies, such as an Aquatic Invasive Species Treatment Lock, which would protect the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins while allowing the movement of vessels between them. This should happen simultaneously with, and not divert resources or focus away from, finalizing the GLMRIS-Brandon Road Study.**
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## **Invest to Improve Outdated and Failing Drinking Water Infrastructure and Ensure Access to Safe, Affordable Drinking Water**

In 2017, the American Society of Civil Engineers gave our nation's drinking water system a "D" saying that much of our drinking water infrastructure is nearing the end of its useful life.<sup>6</sup> According to the American Water Works Association, an estimated \$1 trillion is necessary to repair, replace, and expand drinking water distribution systems over the next 25 years.<sup>7</sup> This figure does not include the estimated \$30 billion that would be required to replace every lead service line in the country.<sup>8</sup> To address these drinking water infrastructure needs, significantly more investment is needed.

The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund allows communities to improve outdated and failing drinking water infrastructure. Funding for the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund should be increased dramatically.

Additionally, we support policies that ensure access to safe, clean, affordable drinking water for everyone in the country. We encourage progressive payment systems that support long-term infrastructure investment without crippling low-income households. Agencies should also increase transparency and access to water quality and water infrastructure investment information.

### **The Alliance supports federal legislation to:**

- **Appropriate at least \$2.6 billion to the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, which is triple the amount in the FY17 appropriations package and consistent with President Trump's position on funding for this program during his campaign;**
- **Prioritize economically disadvantaged communities in the form of grants via the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund; and**

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<sup>6</sup> 2017 Infrastructure Report Card: Drinking Water. American Society of Civil Engineers. Retrieved from: <https://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Drinking-Water-Final.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> American Water Works Association Testimony before the House Subcommittee on the Environment: Reinvestment and rehabilitation of our nation's safe drinking water delivery systems. March 16, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

- **Establish a federal low-income water and sewer assistance program, that is similar to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, to help low-income households afford their water and sewer bills. We support H.R. 2328, the Low Income Sewer and Water Assistance Program Act of 2017.**
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## **Invest to Improve Outdated and Failing Wastewater Infrastructure**

More than 70 percent of all combined sewers, which collect both sewage and stormwater runoff, in the United States are located in the Great Lakes region.<sup>9</sup> Combined sewer overflows during heavy rain events lead to the dumping of raw or poorly treated sewage into the lakes.

The American Society of Civil Engineers' 2017 Report Card for America's Infrastructure gave the nation's aging wastewater system a "D+."<sup>10</sup> Capital investment needs for the nation's wastewater and stormwater systems are estimated to total \$271 billion over the next twenty-five years.<sup>11</sup> Congress must ensure that communities have access to a sustained source of low-interest loan funding for wastewater infrastructure.

The Clean Water State Revolving Fund provides communities with funding for wastewater infrastructure and should be increased.

**The Alliance supports at least \$4.2 billion in appropriations for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, which is triple the amount in the FY17 appropriations package and consistent with President Trump's position on funding for this program during his campaign. Priority should be given to economically disadvantaged communities in the form of grants via the Clean Water State Revolving Fund.**

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## **Fund the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative at \$300 Million**

Bipartisan support for the federal Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) has resulted in significant on-the-ground results in all eight Great Lakes states. The GLRI supports efforts to clean up toxic pollution, restore fish and wildlife habitat, combat invasive species like Asian carp, and prevent polluted runoff from farms and cities. A Brookings Institution report shows that every \$1

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<sup>9</sup> Report to Congress: Combined sewer overflows into the Great Lakes Basin. U.S. EPA, Office of Wastewater Management. April 2016. Retrieved from: [https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-05/documents/gls\\_cso\\_report\\_to\\_congress\\_-\\_4-12-2016.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-05/documents/gls_cso_report_to_congress_-_4-12-2016.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> 2017 Infrastructure Report Card: Wastewater. American Society of Civil Engineers. Retrieved from: <https://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Wastewater-Final.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

invested in Great Lakes restoration brings a \$2 return in the form of increased fishing, tourism, and home values.<sup>12</sup>

**We support the Healing Our Waters – Great Lakes Coalition’s legislative agenda, which can be found at [www.healthylakes.org](http://www.healthylakes.org), including fully funding the GLRI at \$300 million annually.**

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## **Uphold the Clean Water Act and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Budget**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency plays the critical federal role in safeguarding our Great Lakes water resources and coordinating efforts with other federal agencies such as the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the Asian Carp Coordinating Committee. To successfully implement the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, protect public health, and keep our water safe and clean, EPA must receive funding and policy direction that ensures federal Great Lakes efforts do not backslide.

### **The Administration and Congress should:**

- **Maintain EPA’s FY2017 Great Lakes program and staff capacity and water program enforcement capacity into FY2019; and**
  - **Uphold the Clean Water Act to ensure that progress in restoring the Great Lakes is not undermined by weakening bedrock laws that protect clean water.**
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## **Fund Federal Agencies and Programs that are Critical to Protect and Restore the Great Lakes**

Along with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Clean Water Act, and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, there are several other federal programs that are vital to successful protection and restoration of the Great Lakes. These include the Coastal Zone Management Act, the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act, and the Great Lakes Fishery and Ecosystem Restoration Act. Unfortunately, the agencies that administer these programs - the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, respectively - as well as the U.S. Coast Guard and others that uphold Great Lakes protections and administer important programs were targeted for steep cuts by the Administration

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<sup>12</sup> America’s North Coast: A Benefit-Cost Analysis of a Program to Protect and Restore the Great Lakes. Austin, John; Anderson, Soren; Courant, Paul; Litan, Robert.

in FY2018.<sup>13</sup> These core programs and the agencies that administer them, along with the GLRI itself, are the fundamental building blocks of the largest land and water restoration effort undertaken in the Great Lakes in generations.

**The Alliance requests FY19 funding from Congress to support the work of these agencies individually and collectively in order to protect and restore the Great Lakes. This should include:**

- **Authorization of the Coastal Zone Management Act and funding of at least \$85 million;**
  - **Funding for the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Program at the authorized level of \$8 million; and**
  - **\$7 million for the Great Lakes Fishery and Ecosystem Restoration Program.**
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## **Nutrient Pollution: Unsafe Drinking Water, Closed Beaches, and Dead Zones**

Nutrient pollution, which fuels massive harmful and at times toxic algal blooms, is a significant threat to the region's drinking water, quality of life and economic well-being. Nonpoint sources - specifically agricultural sources - are the largest contributor to pollution in western Lake Erie, the area most impacted by this pollution.<sup>14,15</sup> In August 2014, nearly a half-million people in communities around western Lake Erie experienced drinking water bans ranging from two days to more than a week as a result of toxic algae.<sup>16</sup> Algal blooms are also a problem in other parts of the Great Lakes including Green Bay, Wisconsin, and Saginaw Bay, Michigan.

**In the coming year:**

- **The Alliance supports increased funding for the Conservation Title in the next Farm Bill and giving higher priority to funding projects and practices to reduce water pollution from farming operations. Funds for conservation programs intended to reduce water pollution should be awarded based on clean water performance.**

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<sup>13</sup> America First: A Budget Blueprint to Make America Great Again.

[https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/budget/fy2018/2018\\_blueprint.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/budget/fy2018/2018_blueprint.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Ohio Lake Erie Task Force II: Final report. November 2013.

[http://lakeerie.ohio.gov/Portals/0/Reports/Task\\_Force\\_Report\\_October\\_2013.pdf](http://lakeerie.ohio.gov/Portals/0/Reports/Task_Force_Report_October_2013.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Record-setting algal bloom in Lake Erie caused by agricultural and meteorological trends consistent with expected future conditions. Michalak et al., 2013. Retrieved from <https://www.glerl.noaa.gov/pubs/fulltext/2013/20130009.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Behind Toledo's Water Crisis: A long troubled Lake Erie. Wines, Michael. New York Times, August 4, 2014. Retrieved from: [https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/05/us/lifting-ban-toledo-says-its-water-is-safe-to-drink-again.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/05/us/lifting-ban-toledo-says-its-water-is-safe-to-drink-again.html?_r=0)

- **The U.S. and Canada, along with the western Lake Erie states and province, will release final Domestic Action Plans under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement in 2018. These plans must provide assurances that they will achieve the 40% reduction in phosphorus flowing to western Lake Erie by 2025 committed to by the jurisdictions.**
  - **The Great Lakes states and U.S. EPA must adopt clear and measurable targets and standards, including a TMDL (total maximum daily load), for phosphorus and nitrogen pollution for the western Lake Erie basin.**
  - **Western Lake Erie states currently conduct varying levels of monitoring and public reporting of phosphorus loadings. States must adopt a consistent annual monitoring and reporting process to publicly measure progress toward the goal of a 40% reduction in phosphorus flowing to western Lake Erie by 2025.**
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## Plastics

Plastic pollution is a problem in the open water, tributaries, and shorelines of the Great Lakes. Plastic debris makes up 77% to 90% of the total shoreline debris collected during the Alliance's Adopt-a-Beach™ and the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup events.<sup>17</sup>

In the 114<sup>th</sup> Session of Congress, the Microbead Free Waters Act of 2015 became law. This legislation amended the federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to ban rinse-off cosmetics that contain plastic microbeads. This important victory began reducing the amount of plastic pollution entering the Great Lakes when the manufacture of rinse-off cosmetics with plastic microbeads was banned on July 1, 2017. Progress will continue throughout 2018 and 2019 with the ban on the sale of these products starting on July 1, 2018, the ban on the manufacture of over the counter drugs with microbeads on July 1, 2018, and the ban on the sale of over the counter drugs containing microbeads taking effect on July 1, 2019. Canada is implementing similar regulations.

Plastic microbeads, however, are only part of the problem. Recent research has found that microbeads only represent about 16% of the microplastics in the open waters of the Great Lakes and an even smaller percentage in many tributaries. The majority of microplastics in open water are fragments broken down from larger pieces, while most of tributary microplastic is fibers from

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<sup>17</sup> Alexander G.J. Driedger, Hans H. Dürr, Kristen Mitchell, Philippe Van Cappellen, Plastic debris in the Laurentian Great Lakes: A review, *Journal of Great Lakes Research*, Volume 41, Issue 1, 2015, Pages 9-19, ISSN 0380-1330, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jglr.2014.12.020>. (<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0380133015000064>)

synthetic fabrics.<sup>18</sup> Microplastics have also been found in treated drinking water.<sup>19</sup> Reducing this pollution will require identifying the root sources of the plastic and then pursuing policy and consumer behavior campaigns that can credibly reduce the amount entering our Great Lakes.

**The Alliance supports the Save Our Seas Act of 2017, which passed the Senate as S. 756. It has been introduced in the House as H.R. 2748. The Alliance is working with researchers and local communities to determine how we can best address this issue.**



### **About the Alliance for the Great Lakes**

The Alliance for the Great Lakes works to protect the Great Lakes for today and tomorrow. We involve tens of thousands of people each year in advocacy, volunteering, education, and research to ensure the lakes are healthy and safe for all.

Our staff are headquartered in Chicago, with field offices in Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, and Milwaukee. Our Board of Directors represent a wide range of interests and expertise from around the Great Lakes region.

Learn more at [www.greatlakes.org](http://www.greatlakes.org) or follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

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<sup>18</sup> Plastic Debris in 29 Great Lakes Tributaries: Relations to Watershed Attributes and Hydrology. Austin K. Baldwin, Steven R. Corsi, and Sherri A. Mason. Environmental Science & Technology 2016 50 (19), 10377-10385  
DOI:10.1021/acs.est.6b02917

<sup>19</sup> "Plastic Fibers in Tap Water, 2017: Prevalence of microscopic plastic fibers by sample source location." Invisibles: The plastic inside us. Tyree, Chris. Morrison, Dan. Orb Media. [https://orbmedia.org/stories/Invisibles\\_plastics/multimedia](https://orbmedia.org/stories/Invisibles_plastics/multimedia)