



ALLIANCE *for the* GREAT LAKES

2019 Federal Policy Priorities

With the support of Congress, the Great Lakes region continues to make progress toward protecting and restoring the Great Lakes. But we cannot be content with our progress so far. Much more remains to be done.

The Alliance for the Great Lakes has identified key federal policy priorities for 2019. The priorities outlined in this document can have an immediate positive impact on the Great Lakes and the people who live, work, and play in the region.

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.¹ Asian carp larvae have been detected less than 50 miles from the lake.² In June 2017, a Silver Carp was found just nine miles from Lake Michigan.³ The establishment of Asian carp and other aquatic invasive species in the Great Lakes would be catastrophic for the region.

In 2019, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will deliver its Chief's Report on the Brandon Road Lock and Dam project near 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.

¹ 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.

² 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>.

³ 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>.

Congress and the Corps must ensure that funding is available in FY20 for the next phase of the project – preconstruction, engineering and design (PED). Congress must also authorize construction of structural protections at Brandon Road to keep Asian carp from advancing any further toward the Great Lakes.

Federal, state, and local agencies must also work together to implement a two-way solution that stops all aquatic invasive species from moving between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins.

The Alliance supports:

- **Completion of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Chief’s Report for the GLMRIS - Brandon Road Study in 2019;**
- **Appropriation of the federal funds needed for PED in FY20, FY21, and FY22. PED is expected to take three years and cost approximately \$30 million. Under current cost share requirements, 65% of this needs to come from federal funds and 35% from non-federal funds. Year 1 PED costs are \$5,846,000. The Corps needs \$3.8 million in federal funds in FY20 to begin this work;**
- **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 Lock⁴; and**
- **Investigation by the Corps of additional control technologies, such as an Aquatic Invasive Species Treatment Lock⁵, which would protect the**

⁴ 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>.

⁵ Conceptual Aquatic Invasive Species Treatment System for the Chicago Area Waterways. November 2016. The Nature Conservancy and CH2M. Retrieved from: <https://www.glc.org/wp-content/uploads/CAWS-AC-Ref-Book-8b-TNC-AIS-Lock-Treatment-Nov-2016.pdf>.

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, implementation of measures at Brandon Road Lock and Dam.

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.⁶ 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.⁷ This figure does not include the estimated \$30 billion that is required to replace every lead service line in the country.⁸ To address these drinking water infrastructure needs, significantly more investment is needed.

The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) allows communities to invest in outdated and failing drinking water infrastructure. America’s Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 reauthorized the Drinking Water SRF for the first time in more than two decades. While it increased the authorization for the Drinking Water SRF, funding needs to be increased dramatically to better meet the needs of communities across the region and nation.

Additionally, we support policies that ensure access to safe, clean and 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.

⁶ 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>.

⁷ 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.

⁸ Ibid.

The Alliance supports federal legislation to:

- **Provide at least \$3.5 billion to the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, which is triple the amount provided in FY18 appropriations;**
- **Prioritize funding for financially distressed communities in the form of grants via the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund;**
- **Provide \$50 million for the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) authorized by America’s Water Infrastructure Act of 2018; and**
- **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.**

Invest in Stronger, More Resilient Communities by Updating 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.⁹ Combined sewer overflows during heavy rain events lead to raw or poorly treated sewage being dumped 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+".¹⁰ Capital investment needs for the nation’s wastewater and stormwater systems are estimated to total \$271 billion over the next twenty-five years.¹¹

⁹ 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_csos_report_to_congress_-_4-12-2016.pdf.

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

¹¹ Ibid.

For most municipalities, water infrastructure is second only to transportation infrastructure in the cost to repair and rebuild it. Cities across the Great Lakes region are in great need of investments to update failing water infrastructure and often lack the financial resources to finance and fund these investments.

The Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) provides communities with funding for wastewater infrastructure. The amount of funding available through the Fund should be dramatically increased.

The Clean Water SRF can also be an important source of funding for green infrastructure. Green infrastructure can help control stormwater runoff, reduce combined sewer overflows, and provide other local environmental, public health, and economic benefits¹². Issues around operations and maintenance of green infrastructure is a barrier to more municipalities using green infrastructure to manage stormwater runoff. Some funds from the Clean Water SRF should be allowed to be used for operations and maintenance of green infrastructure to supplement local dollars and help address these issues.¹³

The Alliance supports:

- **At least \$5.1 billion in appropriations for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, which is triple the amount provided in FY18 appropriations;**
- **Prioritize funding for financially distressed communities in the form of grants via the Clean Water State Revolving Fund;**
- **Make funds available from the Clean Water State Revolving Fund for operations and maintenance of green infrastructure, with priority given to financially distressed communities;**

¹² The Value of Green Infrastructure: A Guide to Recognizing Its Economic, Environmental and Social Benefits. 2010. Center for Neighborhood Technology and American Rivers. Retrieved from: https://www.cnt.org/sites/default/files/publications/CNT_Value-of-Green-Infrastructure.pdf.

¹³ Great Lakes Commission and Credit Valley Conservation (2018). *Great Lakes Regional Green Infrastructure Policy Analysis: addressing barriers to implementation*. Retrieved from: <https://www.glc.org/wp-content/uploads/GI-policy-analysis.pdf>.

- **Full funding for the Sewer Overflow Control Grants program created by America’s Water Infrastructure Act of 2018. It is authorized at \$225 million and would be administered by U.S. EPA to deal with sewer and sanitary sewer overflows, including the use of green infrastructure to manage stormwater runoff; and**
 - **Full funding for the Innovative Water Infrastructure and Workforce Development Program created by America’s Water Infrastructure Act of 2018. This \$1 million competitive grants program would be administered by EPA and help develop the next generation of water utility workers.**
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Nutrient Pollution: Unsafe Drinking Water, Closed Beaches, and Dead Zones

Nutrient pollution, which fuels massive harmful algal blooms, is a significant threat to the region’s drinking water, quality of life, and economic well-being. Runoff from agricultural lands is the largest contributor to pollution in western Lake Erie, the area most impacted by this pollution.^{14,15}

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.¹⁶ Unfortunately, harmful algal blooms are the norm in western Lake Erie and in other parts of the Great Lakes including Green Bay, Wisconsin, and Saginaw Bay, Michigan.

In the coming year:

- **The Alliance supports full funding for Farm Bill Conservation Programs authorized in the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018;**

¹⁴ Ohio Lake Erie Task Force II: Final report. November 2013. Retrieved from:

http://lakeerie.ohio.gov/Portals/0/Reports/Task_Force_Report_October_2013.pdf.

¹⁵ 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>.

¹⁶ 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.

- **The Great Lakes states and U.S. EPA must adopt a Clean Water Act Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for phosphorus and nitrogen pollution for the western Lake Erie basin;**
 - **The Alliance supports funding for consistent water quality monitoring and annual reporting on whether existing pollution control targets are being achieved in western Lake Erie and Green Bay;**
 - **The Alliance supports the use of the Clean Water State Revolving Fund to pay for land conservation projects that improve water quality; and**
 - **The Alliance supports the Land and Water Conservation Fund. It should be permanently authorized and receive full, dedicated funding to ensure continued conservation of natural areas, wildlife habitat and open spaces from urban parks to large landscapes. The Land and Water Conservation Fund preserves wetlands, forests, watersheds and green space which are critical to protecting water quality.**
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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.

In 2018, a team of Great Lakes organizations worked with the University of Michigan's Research Seminar in Quantitative Economics to analyze the economic impacts of funding provided by the GLRI between 2010 and 2016. The study showed that every dollar of federal spending on GLRI projects between 2010 and 2016 will produce \$3.35 in additional economic activity in the Great Lakes region through 2036. Some communities will benefit even more. Older industrial cities, such as Buffalo and

Detroit, may see more than \$4 in additional economic activity through 2036 for every GLRI project dollar spent between 2010 and 2016.¹⁷

As a member of the Healing Our Waters – Great Lakes Coalition, we support its legislative agenda, including fully funding the GLRI with at least \$300 million annually.

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

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency plays an essential 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, U.S. EPA must receive funding and policy direction that ensures federal Great Lakes efforts do not backslide.

The Alliance requests that Congress:

- **Provide U.S. EPA Region 5 with the funding and staff capacity necessary to fulfill its duties to protect water for humans and wildlife; 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. The Alliance opposes the effort by President Trump’s U.S. EPA to rewrite the Waters of the United States rule and weaken it by removing protections for many wetlands and small streams across the country. The existing rule provides critical oversight to protect our waterways from harmful pollution and should remain in place.**

¹⁷ Assessing the Investment: The Economic Impact of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Summary Report by the Great Lakes Commission and Council of Great Lakes Industries. September 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.glc.org/wp-content/uploads/GLRI-Project-Summary-Report-20180924.pdf>.

Fund Federal Agencies and Programs Critical to Protecting and Restoring the Great Lakes

Along with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Clean Water Act, and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), there are many federal programs that are vital to successful protection and restoration of the Great Lakes. The agencies that administer these programs – the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and others – were targeted for steep cuts by the Administration in FY 2019.¹⁸

Along with the GLRI, these agencies and the programs they administer are the fundamental building blocks of the largest land and water restoration effort undertaken in the Great Lakes in generations.

The Alliance requests 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;**
- **\$7 million for the Great Lakes Fishery and Ecosystem Restoration Program;**
- **Funding for the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Amendments Act of 2017 at the authorized level of \$22 million;**
- **Funding for the Great Lakes and Lake Champlain Invasive Species Program at the authorized level of \$50 million;**

¹⁸ Efficient, Effective, Accountable: An American Budget. February 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/budget-fy2019.pdf>.

- **Funding for NOAA’s Marine Debris Program at the authorized level of \$10 million; and**
 - **Funding for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to carry out the Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study. The Study will identify vulnerabilities along the Great Lake coastline and serve as a blueprint for future investment and management of the Great Lakes coast to ensure local communities are more resilient.**
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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 or follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.