



ALLIANCE for the  
GREAT LAKES

Summer/Fall 2020

# Watermarks

**Celebrate the Past,  
Shape the Future**

50 years  
of Great Lakes  
Protection



## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

### Looking to the Future: Water, Justice, & Health Are All Connected



It's a big year for the Alliance as we mark our 50th anniversary, but certainly not the year we planned. The COVID-19 crisis, and resulting individual and economic stresses, has upended all of our lives.

We've rethought everything: from our offices - our team has been working fully remotely since mid-March - to our volunteer programs, donor events, and advocacy campaigns. I'm proud to report that our staff

and board adapted quickly. Although we are implementing it differently than planned, our Great Lakes protection agenda is unwavering.

And this summer, high-profile incidents including the death of George Floyd, killed by a police officer May 25 in Minneapolis, and the threats against Christian Cooper while birding in Central Park in New York City, led to collective calls for racial justice across the country. We cannot achieve our vision of a Great Lakes enjoyed by all when systemic racism permeates our society.

No one should fear for their health and safety when enjoying everything the Great Lakes have to offer - from hanging out with friends on a Chicago beach to drawing a glass of water from the tap at home to jogging along a lakefront trail by the remote shores of Lake Superior. All too often, black, brown, and indigenous people cannot take these things for granted.

The Great Lakes and clean water are an issue that enjoys strong support from nearly all corners. As I look to the Alliance's next 50 years, I am challenging myself to build solutions and a movement that are inclusive and just, reflecting our whole region.

I look forward to working with you, and people across the Great Lakes to ensure that our lakes are safe, clean, and accessible to all.

**Joel Brammeier**, President & CEO



### Clean Water, More Important Than Ever

"We need a long-term commitment to ensuring everyone in the Great Lakes region has access to safe, clean, affordable water."

Delivering drinking water more safely and affordably has climbed the Alliance agenda in recent years. Then came the COVID-19 crisis. It has brought a stark reminder of the intrinsic connection between water and public health.

As the crisis unfolded in March, we immediately joined local and state partners in calling on local governments to halt residential water service shut-offs and restore service for those without water. It was completely unacceptable to continue water shut-offs while simultaneously

urging handwashing to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

We applaud state and local government officials who stepped in to protect health and safety. Great Lakes governors including Ohio Governor DeWine and Michigan Governor Whitmer called for emergency action to stop water shut-offs in their states. Cities like Cleveland, Toledo, Chicago, and Detroit implemented emergency measures to halt residential water shut-offs in their cities.

However, as the Alliance's Vice President of Policy & Strategic Engagement Crystal M.C. Davis notes, most of these emergency orders were temporary. "What happens when we are no longer in a state of emergency?" she asks "Water shut-offs should be stopped permanently. We need a long-term commitment to ensuring everyone in the Great Lakes region has access to safe, clean, affordable water. It's going to take a commitment to addressing this issue at all levels of government."

#### THE 2020 ELECTION SEASON & THE GREAT LAKES

A toolkit for getting involved

### Voter Toolkit and Online Voter Center Inform Great Lakes Voters

As the 2020 election season ramps up, voters are researching candidate platforms, attending events and asking tough questions of candidates, and talking with family, neighbors, and friends about the election. We've launched our new toolkit - **The 2020 Election Season & the Great Lakes** - and a new online voter information center at [www.greatlakes.org/2020election](http://www.greatlakes.org/2020election)

While the presidential election is driving much of the election year conversation, candidates are running for offices at the local, state, and federal levels. Every office on the ballot, from mayors to the President of the United States, will have the opportunity to influence Great Lakes and water issues once in office.

Toolkit and voter information center online at  
[www.greatlakes.org/2020election](http://www.greatlakes.org/2020election)



# Reflecting on the Past, Shaping the Future

The Great Lakes are far healthier and better protected than they were 50 years ago, because the public saw fit to value them. That's a legacy worth preserving.

In 1970, members of a then-new environmental movement launched the Lake Michigan Federation (our name until 2005), Earth Day, and other efforts. Here in the Great Lakes region, advocacy, education, research and volunteer work built support for their protection that transcends political and geographic divisions like few other environmental issues.

This was true of the campaigns that resulted in landmark pollution protections via the Clean Water Act, the Great Lakes Compact ban on most water diversions, and cleanup of toxic hotspots left over from industrial pollution. Hammering out agreements took tough conversations between leaders willing to sit down with those who had strongly opposing viewpoints and a willingness to focus on both today and future generations.

## Looking Forward

While we have much to be proud of, nostalgia can blind us to fresh opportunities for growing the Great Lakes movement and stifle innovation. So, as we celebrate, we also ask **“What’s next, and how can we do better?”**

To help answer that question, we commissioned author and journalist Kari Lydersen to look at the Great Lakes and clean water issues that have shaped our region. The stories and in-depth interviews she gathered challenge us to look forward to a Great Lakes movement that’s ready to ensure our lakes are safe, clean, and accessible to all.

Visit [www.greatlakes.org/50years](http://www.greatlakes.org/50years) to read the in-depth series



### The Great Lakes Compact and Climate Change

**“In this era of big [lake level] swings and rapid change, it is all the more important and very fortunate to have something like the Great Lakes Compact in force so that in a period of high water, short-sighted officials don’t rush out and propose deals that end up looking terrible when we go back into a period of low water, which we always do. We have more volatility, more uncertainty, so the importance of a stabilizing factor like the Compact is arguably more important than ever.”**

PETER ANNIN  
*Author, “The Great Lakes Water Wars”*

### Invasive Species in the Great Lakes: Major Victories Achieved, But Eternal Vigilance Needed

**“Thirty years after the zebra mussel invasion, we’re still coming to grips with what the effects are. It changed everything. Whereas sea lamprey are top-down predators, killing grown fish with wounds that are very obvious, zebra mussels are a little more insidious. They are at the bottom of the food web, and their impact ripples throughout the ecosystem.”**

MARC GADEN

*Legislative liaison for the Great Lakes Fishery Commission*



### Toxic Contamination Past and Present: Creating a Legacy

**“These Great Lakes helped deliver this country through two World Wars, through different economic downturns, fueling industry and providing jobs that benefited the whole country. It’s our time to give something back to the Great Lakes.”**

CAMERON DAVIS

*Former Alliance for the Great Lakes President & CEO*



50 years!

Our progress is thanks to you and all who’ve donated, volunteered, spoken out in favor of, and supported the Great Lakes since 1970! More people support the Alliance today than ever before in our history. This movement depends on people like you. Thank you.



### Pollution from Point Source to Nonpoint-Source

**“We’d spent so much time protecting our water supply from diversion in the 2000s. Then one day hundreds of thousands of people woke up and...there was plenty of water but no one could use it safely. That shocked the Great Lakes region.”**

JOEL BRAMMEIER

*President & CEO, Alliance for the Great Lakes*



### Community Partnerships, Listening and Learning: A Driving Force

**“The Alliance is listening to communities and then integrating what we’ve heard into our water priorities. And we do more than listening. We are now actively supporting the communities that we engaged by advocating for policies that address the issues that they identified.”**

CRYSTAL DAVIS

*Vice President of Policy, Alliance for the Great Lakes*





## Adopt-a-Beach:

New website up, September 26 cleanup a hit

Great Lakers have been using [adopt.greatlakes.org](https://adopt.greatlakes.org) all summer; many more plan fall clean-ups adapting to COVID-19 safety

Last spring we retired our old Adopt-a-Beach website and launched a new, easier to use site. The mobile-friendly site makes it simple for volunteers to find and register for cleanup events. And it makes it easier for Team Leaders to create and manage their cleanups. Give it a test run at [adopt.greatlakes.org](https://adopt.greatlakes.org)!

Great Lakers have planned cleanups on the new site all summer and many more made plans to hit the beaches Saturday, September 26 for **September Adopt-a-Beach**—our annual day of action, also celebrating

the 35th annual International Coastal Cleanup this year.

Like everything this year, September Adopt-a-Beach, and all of our clean-ups, have adapted to heightened safety needs. We have three ways to get involved:

### Join or host your own cleanup.

We encourage Team Leaders to limit group size or hold a solo cleanup on your own or with immediate household members.

**Clean in your neighborhood.** Litter in your neighborhood can find its way into the Great Lakes via storm drains on your street. And litter is gross wherever it falls!

Spread the word about plastic pollution.

More than 85% of the trash Adopt-a-Beach volunteers collect is made from plastic. Spread the word about the impact of plastic pollution on the Great Lakes and how people can reduce their plastic use.

**Goals for our clean-ups remain the same:** tackle trash and prevent plastic pollution, be safe, and have fun. We'll see you at the beach!



Thank you to our generous Adopt-a-Beach sponsors!

Fund for Lake Michigan    AT&T  
Brunswick Foundation    Freudenberg    Meijer



## Great Lakes Water Levels Q&A

High water levels around the Great Lakes region have been a big topic around the region this summer. Have questions? We've got answers. Learn more at [greatlakes.org/waterlevelsfaq](https://greatlakes.org/waterlevelsfaq)

## H.O.M.E.S. School 8 fun Great Lakes lessons

When work and school moved to people's homes earlier this year, the Alliance created a series of lessons to help young people learn why the Great Lakes are so great.

The series takes its name, H.O.M.E.S. from the first letter of each Great Lake, of course!

**Topics include learning about:** Maps, Watersheds and the water cycle, Earth Week, Habitats, Food changes and food webs and more.

**Lesson plans are tailored for home learning,** with easy to follow activities for all ages. For educators and those who want to learn more, we offer resources to dig in deeper on the topic with links to other lessons and activities. Find the H.O.M.E.School series at [www.greatlakes.org/homeschool](https://www.greatlakes.org/homeschool).

### TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

We'd love your feedback about our Watermarks newsletter. We're also happy to answer your questions about pressing Great Lakes issues. Email us at [alliance@greatlakes.org](mailto:alliance@greatlakes.org).

### IN BRIEF

## Celebrations Postponed, Save the Date for 2021

We'd planned blowout parties to celebrate our milestone 50th anniversary -- the Great Blue Benefit in Chicago and Clean Lake Benefit in Cleveland. With the continuing health crisis, we can't safely or responsibly bring people together as hoped.

Instead we'll celebrate our 50th throughout the coming months, culminating with events in 2021. We're grateful to all who have offered to support the organization including many who've donated at the same or similar level to what they would have contributed if they attended.

### SAVE THE DATES

Giving Tuesday **December 1, 2020**

Great Blue Benefit **June 3, 2021**



ALLIANCE for the  
GREAT LAKES

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Photos in this issue by Jeanette Chwan, Marcia Clark,  
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The Alliance for the Great Lakes  
works across the region to protect  
our most precious resource:  
the fresh, clean, and natural  
waters of the Great Lakes.

