

# Top 5 Great Lakes Federal Policy Priorities for 2023

We've identified the top five opportunities for Congress and federal agencies to address challenges facing the Great Lakes. Equity and justice are embedded throughout these policy priorities. Federal water programs must prioritize low-income communities and communities of color, where the burden of pollution often hits hardest. Congress and the administration must ensure that community voices are at the table and listened to from the beginning of all decision-making.



## Water Infrastructure

**Increase water infrastructure funding, prioritize funding for communities most in need**

The Great Lakes region needs at least \$188 billion over the next twenty years to fix failing water infrastructure. Current federal funding programs will not meet this need. Congress must provide additional funds for water infrastructure, and it must be structured to reach communities with the highest need.

*In 2023, we urge Congress to:*

- Increase annual funding to at least \$8 billion for the Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Funds
- Increase by \$1 billion annual funding levels for lead service line replacement and emerging contaminants
- Pass a federal ban on water shutoffs
- Establish a federal program to provide financial assistance for water and sewer bills

*In 2023 we urge the US Environmental Protection Agency to:*

- Work with states to ensure equitable distribution of infrastructure funding and provide technical assistance to disadvantaged and underserved communities
- Complete the Drinking Water Needs Assessment in early 2023 to increase the amount of lead service line funding to Great Lakes states which have the highest number of lead pipes in the country



## Agriculture

**Pass a Farm Bill that prioritizes clean water**

Agriculture is the largest unaddressed source of nonpoint pollution in the Great Lakes region. Runoff from agricultural lands puts the Great Lakes at risk, polluting drinking water, threatening wildlife, and harming the regional economy. In 2023, Congress can pass a Farm Bill that ensures farms produce clean water, not pollution, along with their crops.

*In 2023, we urge Congress to pass a Farm Bill that:*

- Increases funding for US Department of Agriculture conservation programs
- Includes provisions to ensure accountability for farm conservation programs aimed at stopping runoff pollution from agricultural lands
- Reduces funding for concentrated animal feeding operations



## Plastic Pollution

### Pass legislation to stop plastic pollution

Researchers estimate that 22 million pounds of plastic pollution enter the Great Lakes annually. Plastic pollution isn't just an unsightly problem in our waterways. It poses a serious threat to human and wildlife health. Congress has an opportunity to be a leader on reducing plastic pollution.

*In 2023, we urge Congress to pass legislation that:*

- Makes plastic waste producers responsible for its reduction
- Reduces the federal government's use of single-use plastics
- Funds additional research on the public health impact of plastics.



## Invasive Species

### Protect the Great Lakes from aquatic invasive species

Preventing invasive species from entering is the best way to protect the Great Lakes. The battle against invasive species is focused on two fronts – stopping invasive carp from entering the Great Lakes and cleaning up ship ballast tanks.

*In 2023, we urge Congress to:*

- Fund the next phases of construction of the Brandon Road project to stop invasive carp

*In 2023, we urge federal agencies to take the following actions:*

- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers should continue implementing the Brandon Road project with public participation and work with the state of Illinois to finalize the project partnership agreement.
- The U.S. EPA should issue rules requiring all vessels operating on the Great Lakes, including lakers, to clean up their ballast tanks.



## Great Lakes Restoration

### Update and fund Great Lakes restoration programs

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) is one of the most important tools in the region's toolbox to protect and restore the lakes. In addition to continued investment in the GLRI, federal agencies should revise the Great Lakes restoration strategy.

*In 2023, we urge Congress to:*

- Fund the GLRI with at least \$425 million in FY24

*In 2023 we urge federal agencies to take the following actions:*

- The White House and US EPA should update the Great Lakes action plan to address environmental injustice, climate resilience, and the next generation of risks to the Great Lakes
- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers should include large-scale natural infrastructure in the Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study to address extreme water level changes caused by climate change.