



GREAT LAKES LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS

Great Lakes News for Legislators

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About the Caucus



The Great Lakes Legislative Caucus is a nonpartisan group of state and provincial lawmakers from eight U.S. states (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Wisconsin) and two Canadian provinces (Ontario and Quebec).

Sen. Patricia Birkholz of Michigan serves as chair of the caucus. The Midwestern Office of The Council of State Governments provides staffing services for the caucus. Funding for the caucus is provided by The Joyce Foundation.

Great Lakes Links

- [Great Lakes Legislative Caucus - State and Federal Legislative Trackers](#)
- [Alliance for the Great Lakes](#)
- [Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative](#)
- [Great Lakes Commission](#)
- [Great Lakes Environmental Law Center](#)
- [Great Lakes Echo](#)
- [Great Lakes Information Network](#)
- [Great Lakes Regional Collaboration](#)
- [Great Lakes Restoration Initiative](#)
- [Great Lakes United](#)
- [Great Lakes WATER Institute](#)
- [Healing Our Waters Coalition](#)
- [International Joint Commission](#)
- [Northeast-Midwest Institute](#)
- [The Joyce Foundation](#)
- [The Council of Great Lakes Governors](#)



With funding support from the Joyce Foundation, The Midwestern Office of The Council of State Governments provides staffing services for the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus.

More information on CSG Midwest is available at www.csamidwest.org or by calling 630.925.1922.

CSG Midwest is one of four regional offices of The Council of State Governments, a national nonpartisan, nonprofit association of state elected officials.

Contacts

- [Tim Anderson](#)
- or
- [Mike McCabe](#)
- 630.925.1922

New money flowing to Great Lakes restoration projects: First grant recipients announced

The [first round of Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grants](#) have been awarded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for various projects that address ecological threats such as invasive species, non-point source pollution and contaminated sediment. State government agencies, universities, local municipalities and conversation groups are among the recipients.

First round of grants awarded under Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

State	Total award amount	# of projects awarded grants	Recipients of awards			
			State government	Local government	University	Other
Illinois	\$8.8 million	24	2	11	7	4
Indiana	\$5.8 million	9	4	0	3	2
Michigan	\$58.8 million	81	23	17	21	20
Minnesota	\$7.9 million	13	6	0	4	3
New York	\$12.9 million	28	8	4	6	10
Ohio	\$19.0 million	28	13	10	3	2
Pennsylvania	\$1.7 million	5	1	1	2	1
Wisconsin	\$13.8 million	24	1	15	6	2

Source: <http://greatlakesrestoration.us> and CSG Midwest calculations

Here is a brief summary of the grants awarded in each of the eight Great Lakes states.

* A total of 24 Illinois-based projects received funding, with the largest grant of \$1 million going to a University of Illinois at Chicago outreach program for health care professionals to learn more about the benefits and risks (such as mercury exposure) of Great Lakes fish consumption.

* A total of nine Indiana-based projects received funding, with the largest grant of \$1.7 million going to the state's Department of Environmental Management. That money will, in part, be used to restore the Grand Calumet River and Harbor -- the only site in Indiana identified as an "Area of Concern" by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The state agency will receive another \$1.3 million to restore 230 acres of wildlife habitat within the Grand Calumet River Area of Concern.

* A total of 81 Michigan-based projects received funding, with the largest grant of \$7 million going to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. The commission will use the money for new techniques designed to control sea lamprey, an invasive species introduced to the lakes in the early 20th century.

* A total of 13 Minnesota-based projects received funding, with the largest grant of \$1.6 million going to the state Department of Natural Resources for a project that evaluates methods to control mercury emissions during the processing of taconite.

* A total of 28 New York-based projects received funding, with the largest grant of \$1.5 million going to Clarkson University to enhance the Great Lakes Fish Monitoring and Surveillance Program, which analyzes the impact of various pollutants on the Great Lakes ecosystem.

* A total of 28 Ohio-based projects received funding, with the largest grant of \$3 million going to Cuyahoga County for the restoration of fish habitat within the [Cuyahoga River Area of Concern](#).

* A total of five Pennsylvania-based projects received funding, with the largest grant of \$531,000 going to Penn State University, which will lead a new education and outreach effort of the Great Lakes Sea Grant Network designed to keep pharmaceutical and personal care products, or PPCPs, out of the Great Lakes. The goal of this effort is to "properly dispose of well over 10,000 pounds of PPCPs."

* A total of 28 Wisconsin-based projects received funding, with the largest grant of \$2 million going to Brown County for an initiative that aims to de-list the [Green Bay Area of Concern](#). Under this project, a portion of the man-made Renard Island will be capped with clean dredged material -- thus protecting humans and wildlife from the island's PCB-contaminated soils.

New Asian carp director speaks about long-term solutions to keep aquatic invaders out of Great Lakes; states briefed on ongoing prevention efforts

Will a poisoning or genetic engineering of Asian carp ultimately be the long-term solution that saves the Great Lakes from these invasive species?

[In a recent interview with NPR](#), the White House's Asian carp director -- appointed to the newly created position within the Council on Environmental Quality in September -- said this idea was "one of the best hopes that we have." For the toxin to be employed, its effects would have to be isolated to Asian carp. John Goss, the new Asian carp director who formerly headed up the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, also said the government is exploring various options to permanently separate the Mississippi River and Great Lakes watersheds, including a closing of the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal.

Late last month, several Great Lakes environmental and fishing groups traveled to Washington, D.C., [to urge the federal government to accelerate efforts](#) to permanently divide the watersheds. They say the only real long-term solution is to ecologically separate the two systems.

Also in September, key state leaders were briefed on current efforts, as well as future plans, to keep Asian carp out of the Great Lakes. [This document](#) highlights some of the key initiatives being undertaken: the use of eDNA testing; commercial harvesting of Asian carp in the Illinois River (more than 100,000 pounds of Asian carp have been removed in one stretch of the river); strengthening the electric barrier system; and increased audits and inspections of bait shops. The same document also notes that other pathways for Asian carp to enter the Great Lakes must be identified and closed. For example, in Indiana, flooding in the northern part of the state could cause a hydrologic connection between the Wabash and Maumee Rivers -- and ultimately allow Asian carp to reach Lake Erie. Efforts are already under way to prevent carp from entering the Great Lakes via this pathway.

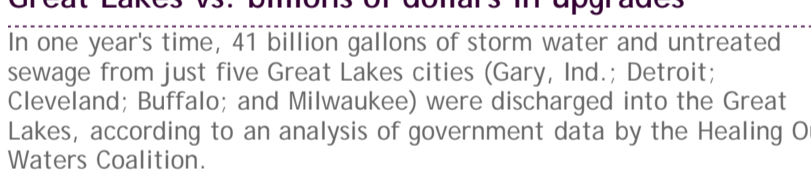
[New study will explore potential impact of Asian carp invasion](#)
As efforts continue to keep Asian carp out of the Great Lakes, [a new binational study](#) is being pursued to determine the risk that these invasive species pose to the ecosystem. In part, this assessment will evaluate the likelihood of the three species of Asian carp spreading throughout the entire Great Lakes basin.

[In a Sept. 5 article of The Columbus Dispatch](#), an aquaculturalist with The Ohio State University says the Great Lakes and its natural tributaries don't provide the conditions, in terms of water flow and temperatures, for an Asian carp population to thrive and grow. Other scientists have said the only sure way to test the sustainability of the three Asian carp species in the Great Lakes is for them to enter the basin. If they did thrive and grow, these species would pose a significant risk to native fish and the entire ecosystem.

High cost of old water-treatment systems: Harm to Great Lakes vs. billions of dollars in upgrades

In one year's time, 41 billion gallons of storm water and untreated sewage from just five Great Lakes cities (Gary, Ind.; Detroit; Cleveland; Buffalo; and Milwaukee) were discharged into the Great Lakes, according to an analysis of government data by the Healing Our Waters Coalition.

These numbers, [the coalition concludes in an August report](#), underscore the importance of upgrading the region's wastewater infrastructure. Without such improvements, authors of the study say, the inadequacy of old storm water and sewage-treatment systems will continue to close Great Lakes beaches, sicken children and harm wildlife. Fixing the problem, though, will cost an estimated \$23.3 billion in the Great Lakes region. Along with calling for more federal funding, the report urges local governments to invest more in "green infrastructure improvements": rain gardens, vegetated roofs and pervious pavement, for example.



Source: [Healing Our Waters Coalition \(using data from "2008 Clean Watershed Needs Survey"\)](#)

Around the region: Update on Wisconsin city's bid for Great Lakes water; Illinois' new green infrastructure program; algal blooms in Ohio; and studying climate change's impact on the Great Lakes

* A review of the Wisconsin city of Waukesha's plan to divert Great Lakes water is under way, but officials with the state Department of Natural Resources say more information is needed before the application is deemed complete and a thorough evaluation of the proposal can begin.

[The DNR's letter](#) to Waukesha leaders notes that "the application will set an important precedent" and serve as "an important test to the Great Lakes Compact." According to the [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#), DNR officials won't consider Waukesha's application complete until more questions are answered about costs and the discharge of treated wastewater. Waukesha is the first community to seek a diversion of Great Lakes water outside the basin under the [Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Water Resources Compact](#), which became law in 2008.

In a [September press release](#), the Alliance for the Great Lakes commends Wisconsin for its "cautious, thorough and public approach" to the diversion proposal, adding that the eight-state compact is "the most important vehicle we have for protecting and conserving the waters of the Great Lakes." The interstate agreement bans diversions of Great Lakes water, but it carves out some exceptions -- one of which is for communities such as Waukesha that lie within a "straddling county" of the Great Lakes basin. Waukesha must meet several standards in order to access Lake Michigan water, and its proposal must ultimately be approved by all eight Great Lakes states.

* The state of Illinois has launched the Green Infrastructure Grant Program, which will fund local projects that reduce stormwater runoff and discharges into Illinois waterways. The program is the result of legislation passed in 2009: SB 1489, or the [Green Infrastructure for Clean Water Act](#). Federal funding will be used to start the grant program. Also as a result of the act, [recommendations](#) have been made on how the state can prevent stormwater runoff from entering waterways. One idea is to establish new statewide performance standards.

* The large number of algal blooms seen this year in different parts of Lake Erie and the inland waterways of Ohio has raised concerns about the health of the state's natural resources. Scientists have told the [Cleveland Plain Dealer](#) that the algal bloom problem in 2010 is the worst they have seen. Agriculture runoff, which contains phosphorus that leads to the algal blooms, and high water temperatures have been cited as contributing factors. Along with creating "dead zones" in lakes, algal blooms are a potential threat to human health. [New rules adopted](#) in Wisconsin this year attempt to address this environmental problem. According to Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Secretary Matt Frank, the new rules make his state the first in the nation to develop numeric water quality standards that determine appropriate limits of phosphorus levels in the Great Lakes and other waterways. The rules also establish new "adaptive management" tools for permittees emitting point-source and non-point-source phosphorus pollution. The DNR says it will provide farmers with up to 70 percent of the costs related to implementing the pollution controls needed to meet the standards.

* The impact of climate change on the Great Lakes will be the focus of a new research project in Michigan that has [received grant money](#) from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. According to the [Great Lakes Regional Integrated Sciences & Assessments Center](#), climate change is likely to reduce lake levels, shift patterns of precipitation and alter average seasonal temperatures. The center will be examining how those changes will potentially affect agriculture, watershed management, and natural resource-based recreation and tourism.

Meanwhile, environmental leaders in Michigan and Wisconsin signed a [memorandum of understanding](#) in September that commits the two states to sharing information and collaborating on climate-change adaptation strategies for the Great Lakes watershed. They plan to ask other states in the region to join the effort.

Lawmakers encouraged to participate in newly formed task forces on ballast water, off-shore wind energy

The Great Lakes Legislative Caucus is looking for lawmakers from across the region to serve on two newly formed task forces. The first will examine state and federal policies related to the regulation of ballast water and will pursue the possibility of a basin-wide approach to ballast water rules. The second task force will examine the state's role in off-shore wind energy development and regulations.

If you are interested in participating in these task forces, please contact [Tim Anderson](#) (ballast water) or [Lisa Janairo](#) (wind energy task force).