

Fiscal Year 2011 Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Funding -- \$475 million

The Healing Our Waters®-Great Lakes (HOW) Coalition urges support for appropriating \$475 million for the popular and effective Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in fiscal year 2011. Fiscal year 2010 funds are being spent this year; there is an unprecedented need; through public-private partnerships the region has the ability to get the work done implementing the region's restoration plan; and the eight-state region's economic recovery hinges on a healthy, restored Great Lakes.

Forty million people rely on the Great Lakes for their drinking water, and millions more benefit from the commerce and business that depend on the waters of the Great Lakes. Unfortunately, the health of the Great Lakes continues to be seriously threatened by problems such as untreated sewage, toxic pollution, and invasive species. The eight states that border the Great Lakes and numerous cities, tribes, and non-governmental organizations have invested a significant amount of time and resources in preserving these bodies of water. Additional funding, however, is needed. Unless the federal government continues to invest in the lakes these problems will get worse and the price we pay will be higher.

While restoration efforts to date have made progress, federal funding historically has not kept pace with the enormity of the problem. Over \$26 billion is needed according to the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy, yet Great Lakes programs over the last decade have received only a small fraction of that amount.¹ The region is now embarking on more significant restoration activities thanks to President Obama's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). Cleaning up the Great Lakes is not only critical for the health and quality of life of the region, it will also drive economic development – and jobs – in our nation for years to come. According to the Brookings Institution, an investment of \$26 billion to restore the Great Lakes will lead to at least \$50 to \$80 billion in economic benefit. That's why the region's chambers of commerce, industry, governors, mayors, tribes, and conservation organizations have united around the common goal of restoring the Great Lakes—the largest surface freshwater resource on the planet.

President Obama recognized the importance of a federal commitment to the Great Lakes by including a new \$475 million Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in his inaugural fiscal year 2010 budget. Congress supported the President's request by fully funding the GLRI in fiscal year 2010. This support has energized the region like at no other time and

people are responding. Now is not the time to slow down the progress being made, which is why we were disappointed by the Administration's \$300 million request for fiscal year 2011. Although the HOW Coalition acknowledges that senior Administration officials may believe that fiscal year 2010 funding isn't being obligated quickly enough to justify an additional \$475 million for the GLRI, we disagree with their view. The Environmental Protection Agency's Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO) has worked hard over the last year with their sister agencies to ensure that FY 2010 GLRI funding can be put to good use this year. Everything GLNPO has accomplished in 2009 includes:

- Coordinated 15 different agencies in pulling together a spending plan for the new \$475-million initiative;
- Wrote a plan on how to implement the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration's restoration strategy;
- Held 18 meetings last summer that solicited public feedback on that plan;
- Prepared and issued a Request for Proposals to award over \$120 million in grants to non-federal organizations;
- Coordinated and created 14 interagency agreements (see table below);
- Began developing a system to establish an accountability and reporting system for the Initiative;
- Began renegotiating the bi-national Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement with Canada;
- Continued operating the Great Lakes Legacy Act program and fulfilling other statutory responsibilities.

Spending GLRI Funds

All this work has set the stage for GLRI money to flow this year to on-the-ground restoration work throughout the region. GLNPO and the other federal agencies are obligating GLRI funds. GLNPO will have obligated nearly \$247 million through interagency agreements by the end of March or early April. Other agencies will also have spent their GLRI allocations. NOAA recently awarded GLRI funds to a land acquisition project in Michigan. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will award habitat restoration funds later this year under their Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Program. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, through a transfer of funds

from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will obligate GLRI funds for restoration projects in April. EPA will begin awarding \$120 million dollars worth of grants in April for work that will get underway later this year.

GLRI Interagency Agreements	
Signed	Amount (millions)
DOI-Bureau of Indian Affairs	3.00
DOI-Fish and Wildlife Service	26.22
DOI-Fish and Wildlife Service #2	38.36
DOI-National Parks Service	10.51
DOI-U.S. Geological Survey	22.48
DOC-NOAA	29.72
HHS-ATSDR	5.50
USDA-NRCS	34.09
USDA-APHIS	1.84
DOT-MARAD	3.00
USDA-Forest Service	15.46
Subtotal	190.17
Pending	
DHS-USCG	5.35
DOD-USACE	46.30
DOD-USACE #2	1.50
DOT-MARAD #2	1.00
DOT-FHWA	2.50
Subtotal	56.65
Total	246.81

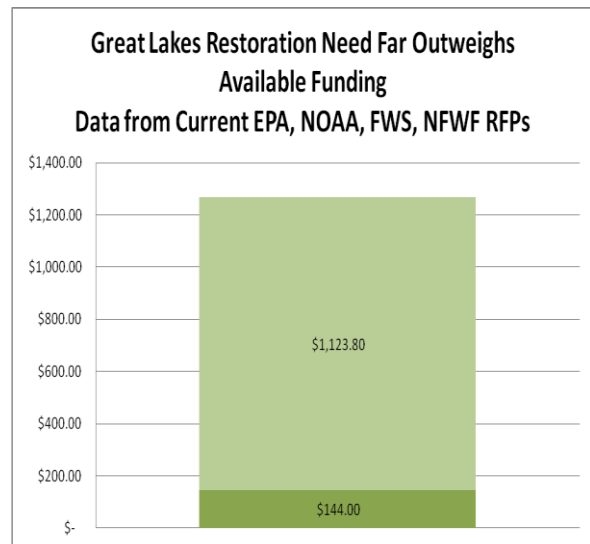
Source: EPA

Need Far Outweighs Available Funding

The preparation for spending the GLRI's appropriation revealed that the amount of funding needed for Great Lakes restoration continues to far outweigh what is available, even with significant new federal support.

EPA, NOAA, the U.S. FWS and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation all recently closed grant solicitations on how to spend GLRI funds. Nearly 1400 proposals were submitted totaling over \$1.1 billion.ⁱⁱ Only 13 percent of proposals on average will receive funding through these solicitations since only \$144 million is currently available (see chart). We expect additional agency requests for proposals to be made available throughout the year. It is important to remember that not all GLRI funds will

go to grants and even if they did, current GLRI funding would still fund less than half the projects that have been proposed through the most recent four RFPs.



Getting Work Done; According to Plan

The restoration work being undertaken with GLRI funds is focused on one goal: to implement the region's restoration plan. Our region produced the comprehensive, science-based "Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes" in 2005, which laid out the steps needed to restore and protect the Great Lakes. After a series of meetings with the public and two public comment periods last year, GLNPO subsequently produced a federal work plan called the "Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Action Plan"ⁱⁱⁱ to implement that strategy: "The GLRC Strategy provides a framework for the Action Plan, and the Action Plan is just that: an *action* driver."^{iv} This plan lays out science-based, measurable five-year restoration goals for the five most significant issues facing the Great Lakes: toxic substances and Areas of Concern; invasive species; nearshore health and nonpoint source pollution; habitat and wildlife protection and restoration; accountability, education, monitoring, evaluation, communication and partnerships.

In addition, with the hope of significant new funds being available this year, most Great Lakes states and many non-governmental organizations worked together closely to develop project proposals that address both their state and the region's top restoration priorities. New York's Department of Environmental Conservation facilitated collaboration

between NGOs, state agencies, and other stakeholders in pulling together a list of projects to be undertaken in the Great Lakes watershed in New York State. Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota also undertook similar efforts to coordinate project submissions and build solid public-private partnerships in order to get work done. For work that could not be undertaken by state agencies because of budgets or capacity, states supported the application of funds by non-governmental organizations that had the expertise and experience to successfully complete restoration work.

In addition to developing a plan, GLNPO also made progress in pulling together a project tracking system based on one used by the Chesapeake Bay program to track progress made in implementing the region’s plan. Reporting requirements are also being built into the interagency agreements, which is partially why it has taken them more time to complete.

Lastly, to ensure that the regional efforts are based on sound science, GLNPO is also establishing a science board, which will provide oversight and advice on the region’s restoration efforts.

Asian Carp

One of the biggest threats facing the Great Lakes today is Asian carp, which swam up the Mississippi River after escaping fish farms in the 1970s. After years of battling to keep Asian carp out of the Great Lakes, Asian carp DNA was recently discovered in Lake Michigan. This startling finding has provoked a serious, though not complete, response from federal agencies. Although we are glad that the President had the foresight to create a GLRI that could respond quickly to this threat, continued use of GLRI funds for Asian carp management would violate one of the GLRI’s own criteria: support new work or “enhance (but do not replace) existing Great Lakes baseline activities.”^v The HOW-GL Coalition believes that over the long term keeping Asian carp out of the Great Lakes must be built into agencies baseline budgets in order to leave the GLRI free to supplement all other restoration activities.

Conclusion

The HOW-GL Coalition recognizes the tough choices Congress faces. Restoring the Great Lakes is not only good for the environment it is also good for the national economy. In addition to support for \$475 million in GLRI funds, we also hope Congress will

support the following recommendations in report language or oversight:

- Spend GLRI funds in the Great Lakes Basin.
- Ensure that all stakeholders helping to restore the Great Lakes – in particular non-governmental organizations – have a voice in setting Great Lakes restoration priorities.
- Streamline application procedures so non-federal stakeholders can use one application form for multiple agency requests.
- Allow EPA to bundle funding for multiple projects (either by the same sponsor or multiple sponsors) in targeted areas in order to more efficiently direct funds to high-priority areas and on multiple issues (either concurrently or consecutively) and to minimize administrative costs for smaller non-governmental groups that have the expertise to do restoration work but may be too small to manage large federal grants.
- Reduce the number of federal programs receiving GLRI funding to better target these investments.

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ⁱ Fiscal Years 2004-2009: \$936 million

ⁱⁱ Current request for proposals; Source: EPA, NOAA, FWS, NFWF

Agency	NOAA	FWS	EPA	NFWF
RFP Amount Available	\$10M	\$8M	\$120M	\$6M
Total Amount Submitted	\$61M	\$44M	\$947M	\$72M
Number of Proposals Submitted	52	167	1057	104

ⁱⁱⁱ Released February 21, 2010

^{iv} EPA. “Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Action Plan.” (2010) Page 4.

^v Ibid. Page 14.