

Great Lakes Days 2023: Policy Priorities

1. Invest in Great Lakes Restoration

Great Lakes restoration investments are producing economic and ecological results. But serious threats remain. Congress must continue supporting our communities by fully funding key restoration programs. Great Lakes restoration investments can also address impacts from our changing climate through nature-based infrastructure and habitat improvement projects, helping reduce flooding and other serious threats. We urge Congress:

- Fully fund Great Lakes restoration and protection programs
 - ~ Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI): no less than \$425 million.
 - ~ Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration (GLFWRA): no less than \$8 million
 - ~ Army Corps Great Lakes Fishery and Ecosystem Restoration (GLFER): no less than \$15 million
 - ~ Defense against invasive carp through the U.S. FWS and USGS invasive carp programs: no less than \$26 million and \$11 million, respectively.



2. Invest in Water Infrastructure

The Great Lakes region is grappling with crumbling and unsafe drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. Our communities need a staggering \$188 billion over 20 years to improve, upgrade, and repair drinking water and wastewater systems. This work is increasingly unaffordable for local communities, with costs too often being passed on to residents who can least afford it. Investing in our region's water infrastructure safeguards our public health, while helping protect communities from flooding, prepare for the impacts of climate change, reduce maintenance and operational costs, and create good paying local jobs.

Historic investments under the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) are reaching communities across the region, providing crucial supplemental funding for critical local and regional water infrastructure projects. Though, the impact of these efforts is under threat without clear Congressional support for full annual funding and equitable implementation of these infrastructure programs. Congress must:

- Fully fund key water infrastructure programs:
 - ~ Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF): no less than \$4.6 billion
 - ~ Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF): no less than \$4.1 billion
 - ~ Sec. 221 Sewer Overflow and Storm Water Reuse Municipal Grants: no less than \$280 million
 - ~ Lead action through the Reducing Lead in Drinking Water program and the Lead Inventorying Utilization Grant Pilot Program: no less than \$200 million and \$10 million, respectively
- Support equitable implementation of water infrastructure investments:
 - ~ Maximize funding provided as grants or forgivable loans to communities most impacted by pollution.
 - ~ Increase investment in staffing at EPA program offices to ensure equitable implementation of the IIJA, enhance community engagement, and increase technical assistance capacity to states and communities.

3. Restore and Strengthen Clean Water Protections

Too many cities and towns are living with unsafe water and we need to do more to protect our Lakes, waterways, and drinking water sources. Legacy pollutants persist, lead pipes contaminate drinking water, PFAS threaten human and environmental health, climate change is overwhelming aging infrastructure, and rollbacks to federal regulations have weakened clean water protections. Congress must make addressing these regional and national issues a priority:

- Protect EPA's and USACE's Waters of the United States (WOTUS) rulemaking, critically reinstating longstanding Clean Water Act protections for wetlands and waterways that safeguard downstream communities and the environment.
- Support the establishment of drinking water standards for toxic PFAS, ensuring dischargers are subject to limits under the Clean Water Act and fund remediation.
- Fund the Administration's Lead Pipe and Paint Action Plan to deploy federal, state and local resources to replace all lead pipes over the next decade and remediate lead paint.
- Direct EPA to exercise its responsibility under the Clean Water Act to establish numeric water pollution standards for nutrients and other pollutants driving toxic algal blooms in our waters.

4. Pass a Clean Water Farm Bill

The Great Lakes region is a major agricultural center, though this has come at a great cost to water quality and public health. This year's Farm Bill is a critical opportunity for Congress to advance legislation that will protect the Great Lakes, enhance water quality across the watershed, address the threat of toxic algal blooms, invest in community development, infrastructure, and public health, and support the implementation of sustainable farming practices and alternative cropping systems. At a minimum Congress must:

- Double Farm Bill Conservation Funding to no less than \$12 billion, ensuring the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and its conservation programs are fully funded and staffed to provide training, technical assistance, monitoring, and support for the implementation of sustainable conservation practices.
- Reform the Federal Crop Insurance Program (FCIP) by providing incentives for the implementation of soil health practices, diversified and regenerative agriculture, and establishing conservation planning and compliance as a requirement for qualification.
- Require the development of water-quality based standards to reduce agricultural runoff, tying funding through conservation and other major assistance programs to the long-term implementation of best practices for clean water outcomes.



Since 2004, the Healing Our Waters—Great Lakes Coalition has been harnessing the collective power of more than 170 groups representing millions of people, whose common goal is to restore and protect the Great Lakes. Learn more at HealthyLakes.org or follow us on Twitter [@HealthyLakes](https://twitter.com/HealthyLakes).

CONTACT US. WE'RE HERE TO HELP.

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