

## Great Lakes Restoration Initiative FY2015-19 Draft Action Plan Summary

On May 30, 2014, the Administration released its Draft FY2015-19 Action Plan for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, an administrative initiative funded since FY2010 that has provided over \$1.6 billion to the Great Lakes. As detailed in the current FY2010-14 Action Plan, the additional funding was meant to supplement base budgets of federal agencies, combining the funding sources to leverage and work with the nonfederal partners to promote greater utilization and effectiveness of the investment. The last available Great Lakes cross-cut budget of all programs supporting restoration indicated a total FY2011 budget of \$977 million (\$300 M GLRI).

Though not authorized under any explicit statute, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has implemented the GLRI program through the Interagency Task Force and under its Clean Water Act authority. As part of oversight, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee requested the Government Accountability Office to perform a review of the GLRI program. The review highlighted the challenges with the current Measures of Progress being able to fully encompass the results from GLRI projects. As part of this second action plan, the administration has modified its focus areas and the corresponding measures, taking into account annual and longer-term goals, as recommended in the GAO review.

NEMWI provides summary points and a side-by-side of the focus areas and Measures of Progress.

### Summary points

- The GAO review cited the methods for measuring progress “may not produce comprehensive and useful assessments of GLRI progress”, due to the Measures of Progress not encompassing all aspects of the projects results. The agency modifies its Measures of Progress, generalizing them and encompassing a wider range of potential areas of progress.
- In modifying its Measures of Progress, the agency:
  - Removes focus on a specific chemical or nutrient and broadens the goal to reduction of nutrients and sediment;
  - Focuses on prevention of invasive species into the system;
  - Incorporates adaptive management;
  - Explicitly requires consideration of lessons learned for future funding decisions;
  - Requires development and incorporation of climate resiliency into projects by 2017.
- Action Plan II assumes a minimum investment of **\$275 million per year**, lower than any previous appropriation but consistent with the Administration’s FY2015 request.
- Action Plan II includes less of a focus on beach health and cleanup, though 20 million people annually use the beaches within the Great Lakes region.
- Action Plan II encourages expansion of traps and other physical barriers in sea lamprey control, as a complementary alternative to the currently-used chemicals.
- The plan continues to emphasize Asian carp control measures, among controls on other invasive species like the wetland plant Phragmites, sea lamprey, and zebra mussels.
- Nutrient and sediment reduction Measures of Progress include measured and modeled reductions, as in-field, direct measurements can be delayed.
- Focus Area 5, Integrated Solutions to Cross-Cutting Issues, increases emphasis on adaptive management and climate resilience. Measures of Progress include development of climate resiliency standards by 2016 and incorporation of these standards into projects by 2017. This schedule will only require approximately two years’ of projects to consider climate resiliency, a key recommendation from the GAO review.