

UPCOMING EVENTS

Public Meeting of the
Science and Information
Subcommittee of the
Great Lakes Advisory Board
March 9, 2016
Chicago, IL
[Details](#)

Great Lakes Hill Happenings

MARCH 2016



GLRI Bill Gains Traction in 2016

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Act has been approved by the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works Committee (EPW) and the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I). Both [S. 1024](#), which was introduced by Sen. Mark Kirk (R-IL), and [H.R. 223](#), which was introduced by Rep. David Joyce (R-OH), authorize the GLRI for five years at \$300 million a year. The GLRI, which was created by the Obama administration in 2010 and was formally authorized by Congress in the FY2016 omnibus appropriations bill, provides dedicated federal assistance to the Great Lakes for restoration efforts. S. 1024 was approved by the Senate EPW Committee on January 20 and H.R. 223 was approved by the House T&I Committee on March 2. The Senate GLRI bill was placed on the Senate legislative calendar at the end of February, where Sen. Kirk and other Great Lakes lawmakers are working to pass it by unanimous consent. In the House, the Great Lakes delegation has made the GLRI Act a priority, and will continue to push to move it forward for a vote. The House passed similar legislation in December of 2014.

NEMWI Holds Multiple Great Lakes Events

The Northeast-Midwest Institute held its annual Great Lakes Environmental Summit on February 4, 2016. The Summit brings together regional stakeholders and policymakers in Washington to discuss legislative opportunities to advance the environmental health of the Great Lakes. The focus this year was on the upcoming second session of the 114th Congress.

Participants at the Summit included Members of Congress, non-governmental organizations, federal agencies, states, industry, and Congressional staff involved with Great Lakes federal policy

issues.

Representatives Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) and David Joyce (R-OH), who both serve on the House Appropriations Committee and are key leaders in Washington on Great Lakes issues, opened up the Summit by providing introductory remarks and taking questions from Summit participants.

Later in the program, Representative Dan Kildee (D-MI) provided an update on the Flint drinking water crisis and the work that he is doing in Congress to help his constituents as they try to move forward.

Congressional staff from the

House and Senate Appropriations and Agriculture Committees, the Senate Commerce Committee, and the House Transportation Committee also briefed the stakeholders on current legislative activities that are of importance to the Great Lakes.

Additionally, on February 25, 2016, the Northeast-Midwest Institute cosponsored the annual Great Lakes Congressional Breakfast Reception with the Great Lakes Commission. Nine members from the Congressional delegation provided remarks at the breakfast, and photos of the event can be viewed [here](#) on the Institute's website.

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Legislative Updates



Great Lakes Fishery Research Authorization Act of 2016 Introduced. [H.R. 4595](#) and [S. 2965](#) were introduced by Reps. Mike Quigley (D-IL) and Dr. Dan Benishek (R-MI) and Sens. Gary Peters (D-MI) and Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) on February 23, 2016. The bipartisan legislation provides the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Great Lakes Science Center with the dedicated funding it needs to conduct critical fisheries research in support of the \$7 billion Great Lakes sport and commercial fishery industry. This is the first time such legislation has been introduced in Congress.

Letter Circulating to Increase Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Funding. Reps. Sandy Levin (D-MI), David Joyce (R-OH), and Louise Slaughter (D-NY) are circulating a letter for signatures in the House that calls on the Appropriations Committee to provide \$300 million in funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). The FY2017 President's budget request includes \$250 million for the GLRI, a reduction of \$50 million from FY2016. The deadline for Members' offices to sign onto the letter is March 14.

2016 Congressional Spring Agenda

FY2017 Appropriations

With the upcoming 2016 Presidential election greatly limiting the number of legislative days that Congress will be in session this year, there is an early push to start the annual appropriations process. House Appropriations Committee Chair Hal Rodgers (R-KY) is aiming to begin marking up bills the week of March 14 and House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) has said that he would like the full House to begin consideration of appropriations bills in early April. Senate Appropriations Chair Thad Cochran (R-MS) has indicated that he wants his Committee to consider all of the appropriations bills by this Spring.

Water Resources Development Act (WRDA)

In 2014, Congress passed the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA), a bill that authorized and reformed U.S. Army Corps of Engineer civil works projects. WRDA is typically revisited by Congress every two years and both the Senate Environmental and Public Works (EPW) Committee and the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee have made a 2016 WRDA bill a priority. The Senate EPW Committee has already solicited Senators for their WRDA priorities with a February 12th deadline and the House T&I Committee has held several hearings and meetings on WRDA. House Chair of the Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee Bob Gibbs (R-OH) has said that a potential WRDA 2016 bill could "address several clarifying and technical changes to WRRDA 2014, and will hopefully also authorize some of the projects that are included in the 2015 and 2016 Annual Reports."

Safe Drinking Water Legislation

In response to the Flint drinking water crisis, key legislators have offered several new proposals to strengthen the Safe Drinking Water Act. Along with legislation being pushed by Senators Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and Gary Peters (D-MI) and Congressman Dan Kildee (D-MI) seeking additional aid to Flint and other communities with lead contaminations, new safe drinking water bills include:

[S. 2583, the FUND Water Act](#) - (Sen. Cardin, D-MD) – Increases the authorized amount for both the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and Clean Water State Revolving Fund.

[S. 2587, the CLEAR Act](#) – (Sen. Cardin, D-MD) – Requires the EPA to develop new regulations to improve reporting, testing, and monitoring related to lead and copper levels in drinking water.

[S. 2588, the GET THE LEAD OUT Act of 2016](#) – (Sen. Cardin, D-MD) - Provides grants to reduce lead in community drinking water supplies and delivery systems.

[H.R. 4653, the Assistance, Quality, and Affordability \(AQUA\) Act](#) – (Rep. Tonko, D-NY) - Increases the authorized amount for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund.

FY2017 President’s Budget Request

President Obama released the Administration's FY2017 budget request on February 9, 2016. The Northeast-Midwest Institute has put together an in-depth budget analysis of the President’s final budget outlining the budget’s impact on the Northeast-Midwest region, which can be viewed [here](#). Additionally, below is a brief overview of some of the programs that most greatly impact the Great Lakes.

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)

2016	REQ 2017	Change
\$300m	\$250m	-16.7%

The FY2017 Request: While the budget request calls for a significant cut to GLRI, it is expected that Congress will continue to look to fund GLRI at the current \$300 million level. The Administration has proposed similar reductions in past budget requests only to have Congress restore funding to the previous levels. Along with providing additional Great Lakes funding to federal agencies, such as the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Agriculture, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the FY2017 GLRI request lists several multi-agency priorities. They include: \$30 million to address Areas of Concern in the Great Lakes, \$13 million to combat invasive carp, \$800,000 to reduce nutrient runoff, and \$3.6 million for habitat and species restoration.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

2016	REQ 2017	Change
\$450m*	\$900m	+100%

The FY2017 Request: The budget request includes \$475 million in discretionary funds and \$425 million mandatory funding. It also pursues permanent authorization in annual mandatory funding beginning in FY2018.

*Only discretionary spending was included in FY2016.

Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Funds (SRF)

SRF	2016	REQ 2017	Change
Drinking Water SRF	\$863.3m	\$1,020.5m	+18.2%
Clean Water SRF	\$1,393.9m	\$979.5m	-29.7%

The FY2017 Request: The request includes an increase of \$157 million for the Drinking Water SRF, which will result in funding for approximately 71 more drinking water infrastructure projects than in FY2016. The requested decrease of \$414 million for the Clean Water SRF will mean approximately 170 fewer wastewater infrastructure projects.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF)

2016	REQ 2017	Change
\$1,254m	\$950m	-24.2%

The FY2017 Request: While the Administration cites that the \$950 million requested for the HMTF in FY2017 is the highest ever requested for this account, it is still well below what Congress appropriated for the HMTF in FY2016. Members of Congress from coastal and port districts will likely fight to maintain at least level funding for the HMTF during the appropriations process.

Additionally, the budget includes \$2.6 million in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ budget to continue the Great Lakes & Mississippi Interbasin Study (GLMRIS) and \$12 million for the operation and maintenance of an electric barrier system at the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal.

Great Lakes Note

EPA Announces Phosphorus Reduction Targets in Lake Erie

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy and Canada's Environment and Climate Change Minister Catherine McKenna announced on February 22 that the U.S. and Canada have adopted targets to reduce phosphorus runoff into Lake Erie by 40 percent. A reduction of phosphorus from entering the central basin of Lake Erie will help minimize low oxygen "dead zones" and help reduce the growth of harmful algal blooms that adversely impact the water quality in Lake Erie. Last summer, the Northeast-Midwest Institute released a report detailing the impact that agricultural runoff has on Lake Erie. The report can be viewed [here](#).

NEMWI Cohosts Asian Carp Briefing

The Northeast-Midwest Institute—in conjunction with the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee—held a Congressional Briefing on invasive carp and the Great Lakes region on February 23. The briefing focused on the current state of and response to the threat that invasive carp pose to the Great Lakes and the actions that are and will be taken to defuse the threat. Representatives from the Environmental Protection Agency, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Geological Survey all spoke at the briefing, which was held the same week as both the National Invasive Species Awareness Week and Great Lakes Days in Washington, D.C. A copy of the slide presentation that was given at the briefing can be viewed [here](#).



The Great Lakes Washington Program advances Great Lakes Protection and Restoration objectives by creating a strong interface between activities of Great Lakes leadership in the region and federal leaders in Washington – particularly Great Lakes Congressional delegation members.

The program supports the goals of the Northeast-Midwest Institute, a Washington-based nonprofit and nonpartisan research, education, and policy organization dedicated to economic vitality, environmental quality, and regional equity for Northeast and Midwest states.

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Strengthening the Region that Sustains the Nation