

## UPCOMING EVENTS

2016 Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative's Annual Meeting  
June 15-17  
Niagara Falls, NY

[Details](#)

# Great Lakes Hill Happenings

APRIL 2016



## White House Hosts Water Summit

In honor of the United Nations' World Water Day on May 22, the White House hosted a Water Summit, bringing together stakeholders to focus on water challenges that communities and regions across the United States are currently facing. Over 150 institutions joined with the federal government to announce new efforts and commitments to create cross-cutting, creative solutions to solving the water problems of today. Commitments announced at the Summit included almost \$4 billion in private capital for water infrastructure investments, over \$1 billion from the private sector for research into new water technologies, and roughly \$35 million this year in federal grants for water science initiatives. More details about the Summit can be viewed [here](#). Additionally, in conjunction with World Water Day, House Great Lakes Task Force Co-Chair Rep. Marcy Kaptur (OH) organized a session of special order speeches on the House floor highlighting the significance of the Great Lakes. Members spoke about the importance of the Great Lakes as an ecological and economical driver of the region. Along with Rep. Kaptur, Reps. Dan Benishek (MI), Mike Kelly (PA), and Dan Kildee (MI) all provided remarks, which can be viewed [here](#).

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## House T&I Committee Approves GLRI Bill

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee approved the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Act ([H.R. 223](#)) by a voice vote during a Committee markup on March 2.

The bill, which was introduced by Rep. David Joyce (OH-14), authorizes the GLRI at \$300 million a year over five years.

An amendment that was included during the markup--authored by Rep. Bob Gibbs (OH-7)--newly requires the Environmental Protection Agency to appoint a point person to coordinate

activities between federal, state, and non-governmental Great Lakes stakeholders when addressing harmful algal blooms under the GLRI.

Additionally, a coalition of Great Lakes advocacy organizations sent a letter to House and Senate leadership calling for them to bring the GLRI Act to each chamber's floor for a vote.

The letter--which was signed by representatives from the Great Lakes Commission, Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, the Great Lakes and St. Law-

rence Cities Initiative, the Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority, the Council of Great Lakes Industry, and the Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition--calls on Congress to pass this legislation as soon as possible.

In the Senate, the GLRI Act ([S. 1024](#)) is sponsored by Sen. Mark Kirk (IL). Full text of the letter can be viewed [here](#).

# Legislative Updates



## Senate Passes SAFE PIPES Act

The Senate passed legislation ([S. 2276](#)) reauthorizing the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) through 2019 by unanimous consent on March 3. The bill includes language, authored by Sen. Gary Peters (D-MI), which provides new pipeline standards to help protect the Great Lakes from the threat of pipeline spills. Among the provisions included in the bill is language that designates the Great Lakes as an

"Unusually Sensitive Area," which increases the requirements that pipeline operators must adhere to in the Great Lakes. Additional information can be found [here](#).

The House Energy and Commerce Committee's Energy and Power Subcommittee considered a discussion draft of a pipeline safety bill on March 16. Details of the markup can be viewed [here](#).

## Great Lakes Task Force Calls for More Great Lakes Federal Funding

The House and Senate Great Lakes Task Forces have called for Congressional Appropriators to provide adequate funding for federal programs that are most beneficial to the Great Lakes. Led by House Co-Chairs Candice S. Miller (MI), Marcy Kaptur (OH), Sean Duffy (WI), and Louise M. Slaughter (NY) and Senate Co-Chairs Mark Kirk (IL) and Debbie Stabenow (MI), the Great Lakes Task Force continues to play a vital role in making sure that the Great Lakes see their fair share of federal resources. The Appropriations letter can be viewed [here](#) and the following is a brief overview of some of the major federal programs that are included in the Task Forces' letters:

### Commerce, Justice and Science

Programs include the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory, Great Lakes Observatory System, Coastal Zone Management grants, National Sea grants programs.

### Interior and Environment

Programs include the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), BEACH grants, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Sea Lamprey control program and Asian Carp program, the U.S. Geological Survey's Great Lakes Science Center, the National Cooperative Geological Mapping program, the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds.

### Energy and Water

Programs include the U.S. Army Corps Great Lakes activities such as Asian carp and other aquatic nuisance species control, harbor navigation maintenance and operation activities, Great Lakes fishery and ecosystem restoration, and the Great Lakes Tributary Model program.

### State and Foreign Operations

Agencies funded include the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and the International Joint Commission.

### Transportation and Housing and Urban Development

The Saint Lawrence Seaway and Development Corporation is funded through the Department of Transportation.

# Congressional Appropriations Budget Hearings

Every year the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees hold various hearings on the administration's FY2017 budget request before drafting their specific appropriations bills. At these hearings, department and agency heads justify their annual budget request. Many of these hearings are of relevance to the Great Lakes. The following is a listing of the appropriations hearings that have occurred to date for the FY2017 budget process with links to the video archive of the hearing.

## Energy and Water

### *House*

February 26— [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Assistant Secretary Jo-Ellen Darcy and Lieutenant General Thomas P. Bostick](#)

### *Senate*

March 2— [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Assistant Secretary Jo-Ellen Darcy and Lieutenant General Thomas P. Bostick](#)

## Interior and Environment

### *House*

March 2—[U.S. Department of Interior Secretary Sally Jewell](#)

March 15—[U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe](#)

March 22—[U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy](#)

### *Senate*

March 2—[U.S. Department of Interior Secretary Sally Jewell](#)

## Homeland Security

### *House*

March 3—[U.S. Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Paul F. Zukunft](#)

## Transportation and Housing and Urban Affairs

### *House*

February 24—[U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx](#)

### *Senate*

March 16—[U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx](#)

# Congress Continues to Focus on Safe Drinking Water

In response to the recent drinking water emergency in communities such as Flint, Michigan and Sebring, Ohio, numerous legislative proposals have been introduced in Congress to address lead contamination across the nation. The House of Representatives passed [H.R. 4470](#) (introduced by Reps. Dan Kildee, MI and Fred Upton, MI), the Safe Drinking Water Act Improved Compliance Awareness Act, a bill creating new requirements for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to provide communities with notification if increased levels of lead are detected. While the Senate has yet to move forward any legislation, the Great Lakes delegation, especially Senators Debbie Stabenow (MI) and Gary Peters (MI), are pushing for additional federal aid for Flint and other communities facing lead contamination. The following is a brief list of recently introduced legislation focusing on improving access to safe drinking water:

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

[S. 2587](#) and [H.R. 4806](#), the **CLEAR Act** – (Sen. Cardin, MD and Rep. Quigley, IL) – Requires the EPA to develop new regulations to improve reporting, testing, and monitoring related to lead and copper levels in drinking water.

[S. 2588](#) and [H.R. 4797](#), the **GET THE LEAD OUT Act of 2016** – (Sen. Cardin, MD and Rep. Duckworth, IL) – 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.

# Great Lakes Note

## Feds Hold Webinar on Algal Blooms

The Interagency Working Group (IWG) formed by the 2014 reauthorization of the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act (HABHRCA 2014; P.L. 113-124) held a webinar on the recently released “Harmful Algal Blooms and Hypoxia Comprehensive Research Plan and Action Strategy: an Interagency Report,” which can be viewed [here](#). The IWG’s report, which is co-chaired by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the National Science and Technology Council, focuses on the intensity of harmful algal bloom (HAB) events, the progress that’s been made since their last report and the increases in demand for information by managers and the public. A major priority for the IWG is to continue to bring attention to the disruptive effects HABs have on the public’s economic and social wellbeing, tourism, and drinking water quality.

Highlights of the new report include:

- Stronger guidelines for freshwater toxins
- New forecast products
- Better research and information on HABs

While the IWG’s most recent report focuses on HAB events nation-wide, under HABHRCA, the IWG is also mandated to release a report specific to HABs in the Great Lakes. More information on the webinar can be found [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***