

UPCOMING EVENTS

12th Annual Great Lakes
Restoration Conference
hosted by the Healing
Our Waters® – Great
Lakes Coalition
Sandusky, Ohio
September 20 – 22, 2016
[Details](#)

Great Lakes Commission
2016 Annual Meeting
Toronto, Ontario
October 6 – 7, 2016
[Details](#)

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JUNE 2016



VIDA Included in House Defense Bill

The U.S. House of Representatives' FY 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) ([H.R. 4909](#)), which was approved by the full House in May, included language incorporating the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (VIDA) ([H.R. 980](#)). VIDA, which was introduced as a standalone bill in the House by Representative Duncan Hunter (CA) and in the Senate by Senator Marco Rubio (FL), removes the EPA's jurisdiction over ballast water under the Clean Water Act and places it solely within the U.S. Coast Guard. While proponents of the legislation argue that the bill is necessary to create a uniformed, cohesive regulatory regime for ballast water management systems, others argue that the bill would weaken environmental standards aimed at preventing invasive species from spreading in and to bodies of water such as the Great Lakes. While the VIDA provision was not included in the Senate's version of the NDAA, it will likely be a topic when the two chambers formally meet to negotiate the NDAA during a conference committee that could occur sometime this summer or fall. The NEMWI has issued a policy brief on VIDA's potential impact on the region that can be viewed [here](#).

New Maritime Strategy Released for Great Lakes

The Conference of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers released the first-ever regional strategy looking to strengthen the Great Lakes maritime industry. Maritime activities account for over \$30 billion in economic activity in both the U.S. and Canada and provide for more than 220,000 jobs.

The new maritime strategy seeks to more than double maritime trade, while shrinking the environmental footprint that such actions might have on the region.

The Governors and Premiers will look to work with other

levels of government at the federal and local levels to implement new policies that help the region grow. Major policy initiatives called upon by the new plan include:

- Creating a new "Poe Class" Lock to ensure the movement of raw materials throughout the Great Lakes;
- Addressing all of the Great Lakes dredging backlog to make sure all commercial transit is permitted to proceed;
- Working to develop a treaty or other binding

agreement between the U.S. and Canada to coordinate the regional maritime strategy; and

- Harmonizing U.S. and Canada border policies to best address commerce and tourism within the system.

The strategy seeks to solidify the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway as a pivotal piece of the Northeast and Midwest economies. The full strategy can be viewed [here](#).

Legislative Updates



GLFWRA Introduced in Senate

Senators Amy Klobuchar [D-MN], Rob Portman [R-OH], Debbie Stabenow [D-MI], and Mark Kirk [R-IL] recently introduced the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act ([S.2949](#)), a bill that authorizes Great Lakes restoration projects by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in partnership with other stakeholders. The bill authorizes \$8 million per year to promote restoration projects while also supporting the USFWS's fish and wildlife conservation offices in the region.

Congress Passes SAFE PIPES Act

Congress approved the SAFE PIPES Act ([S.2276](#)) on June 13. The bill reauthorizes the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration through 2019. The bill includes provisions that designate the Great Lakes as unusually environmentally sensitive to pipeline failures, meaning that inspections of pipelines within the Great Lakes will be required. The bill is expected to be signed into law by the President in the near future.

Congress Looks to Move 2016 WRDA Forward

Both the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee and the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee have approved their respective 2016 Water Resource Development Acts (WRDA), the legislation authorizing Army Corps projects. While both bills authorize new Army Corps projects, the House bill ([H.5303](#)) is a more limited bill, focusing strictly on Army Corps projects. In addition to Army Corps activities, the Senate bill ([S.2848](#)) also includes a new title addressing safe drinking water and water infrastructure and regional environmental restoration programs. While neither chamber has moved forward with the Committee-approved bills, leadership in both the House and Senate have expressed some desire to move WRDA forward in the near future. The following are very brief highlights of each bill:

Senate

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

The Senate bill authorizes the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) at \$300 million for five years. This provision is identical to legislation introduced by Senators Mark Kirk (IL) and Rob Portman (OH) that was approved by the Senate EPW Committee earlier this year.

Safe Drinking Water

The Senate bill modernizes the State Revolving Loan Fund programs and provides additional assistance for replacement of lead service lines. The bill also provides direct emergency assistance to address the drinking water contamination in Flint, Michigan, and other communities facing similar drinking water threats.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

The Senate bill authorizes numerous Army Corps flood control and coastal hurricane protection projects, while also authorizing numerous port improvement projects around the country. The bill includes language that helps clarify the WRRDA 2014 changes to Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund's (HMTF) targets for increased HMTF funding.

House

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

The House bill authorizes 28 new Army Corps of Engineers Chief's Reports, while also providing critical investment in America's ports, channels, locks, dams, and other maritime infrastructure. The bill includes language that would move the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) "off-budget," so that 100% of all funding being collected by the HMTF will go towards the maintenance costs for all federally-mandated harbors, including those in the Great Lakes.

Congressional Appropriations

Both the House and Senate have made progress on their annual appropriations bills for the year. While both chambers have made it a priority to move forward through “normal order,” it remains highly likely that Congress will have to pass a short-term continuing resolution to keep the government funded in the fall due to a shortened legislative calendar and major policy differences between Republicans and Democrats.

Energy and Water

This bill provides the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers funding for all dredging, harbor maintenance, and flood prevention projects and the Department of Energy’s renewable energy programs.

House— Approved by Committee 5/24, but failed on the House floor on 5/26 by a vote of 112—305. The NEMWI fact sheet about funding for programs relevant to the region can be found [here](#).

Senate—Passed Senate. The NEMWI fact sheet about funding for programs relevant to the region can be found [here](#).

Interior and Environment

This bill provides funding for critical environmental programs including the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) at \$300 million for the FY 2017. The bill also provides critical funding for the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds and other major environmental programs that are essential to the Great Lakes.

House—Approved by Committee 6/15. The NEMWI fact sheet can be found [here](#).

Senate—Approved by Committee 6/16. The NEMWI fact sheet can be found [here](#).

Commerce and Justice and Science

This bill provides the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) with funding to focus on such issues as coastal management and its continued work on Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs).

House—Approved by Committee 5/24. The NEMWI fact sheet can be found [here](#).

Senate—Approved by Committee 5/26. The NEMWI fact sheet can be found [here](#).

Transportation and Housing and Urban Affairs

This bill provides the St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation with its annual funding levels and also funds the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), which oversees critical pipeline infrastructure safety that is of great concern in the Great Lakes region.

House—Approved by Committee 5/24. The NEMWI fact sheet can be found [here](#).

Senate—Passed Senate. The NEMWI fact sheet can be found [here](#).

Great Lakes Note

Asian Carp Monitoring Plan Released

The Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee (ACRCC) released its 2016 Monitoring Plan, which includes its first ever Contingency Plan outlining member agencies' preparedness to defend the Great Lakes from Asian carp in the Illinois River system. The ACRCC, which is a partnership made up of members at the international, federal, state and local level, is tasked with preventing the spread and establishment of Asian carp in the Great Lakes. The Monitoring Plan is comprised of various different stakeholder projects aimed at monitoring and assessing the potential movement of invasive carp in the Chicago Area Watery System (CAWS). Additionally, the new Contingency Plan outlines actions that stakeholders would take if significant changes are detected in the number or location of Asian carp in the Starved Rock, Marseilles, Dresden Island, Brandon Road and Lockport Pools of the upper Illinois River. The Plan can be viewed [here](#). The NEMWI and the ACRCC held a Congressional briefing on the 2016 Monitoring and Response Plan in May. The materials that were discussed can be viewed [here](#).

Additionally, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) released a report on its 2015 study on Barge Entrainment and Small Fish in the Chicago Area Waterway System. The full report 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