

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**BRIEFING: Quality  
of Our Nation's  
Groundwater—An  
Invisible and Vital  
Resource**

Friday, March 6  
10 AM  
CVC-268

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# Great Lakes Hill Happenings

FEBRUARY 2015

## Great Lakes Bipartisan Leaders Come Together

The Great Lakes Task Force leaders came together to support policy efforts throughout the month of February, including speaking at the NEMWI Reception and Great Lakes Environmental Summit; circulating letters of support for funding important Great Lakes programs; introducing and passing legislation specific to Great Lakes priorities, like invasive species and algal blooms; and speaking at the annual Great Lakes Congressional Breakfast, co-hosted by the NEMWI and the Great Lakes Commission.

## Great Lakes Task Force New Leaders and Members

Following the retirements of two Great Lakes Task Force co-chairs, Sen. Carl Levin (MI) and Rep. John Dingell (MI-12), the Great Lakes Task Forces have elected new leadership.

In the Senate, Sen. Debbie Stabenow (MI) was elected as the Democratic co-chair, joining Sen. Mark Kirk (IL), the continuing Republican co-chair. On the House side, Rep.

Marcy Kaptur (OH-09) announced her election of the Democratic co-chair position at the NEMWI's Great Lakes Environmental Summit. Sen. Amy Klobuchar (MN) joins as the new Democratic Vice-Chair, joining Republican Sen. Rob Portman (OH).

The new legislative session has seen the addition of multiple new members, including

Reps. Jackie Walorski (IN-02), Dan Kildee (MI-05), and Debbie Dingell (MI-12), among others.

The Great Lakes Task Forces have provided leadership for over 20 years.



# Legislative Updates



Harmful Algal Bloom near Toledo, Ohio, August, 2014. Photo courtesy of NOAA

**Great Lakes Ecological and Economic Protection Act (S. 504):** Co-sponsors include Great Lakes Task Force Co-Chairs Sens. Mark Kirk (IL) and Debbie Stabenow (MI) and leader Sen. Tammy Baldwin (WI). Authorizes the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) program at \$475 m through FY2020. House Great Lakes Task Force leaders introduced their authorization bill (H.R. 223) in January, which authorized GLRI at \$300 m through FY2020.

**Drinking Water Protection Act (H.R. 212):** Co-sponsors include Rep. Bob Latta (OH-05), Great Lakes Task Force Co-Chairs Reps. Candice Miller (MI-10) and Marcy Kaptur (OH-09), and Member Rep. Mike Quigley (IL-05). Requires a strategic plan within 90 days to address human health risks, including recommendations on monitoring and treating algal toxins. Additionally, the bill requires a GAO report on federal spending on public health efforts.

PASSED the House 375-37

**Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (S. 373):** Sets a national standard for ballast water management and discharge under the U.S. Coast Guard with consultation with the EPA. Similar to last year's bill, it removes regulation of ballast water from under the Clean Water Act, and implements a permanent exemption for small vessels from discharge regulation. The bill was marked up, amended, and passed out of its oversight committee with a substitute bill and two amendments (First, Second) offered by Sen. Gary Peters (MI), one of which requires saltwater flushing for entry into the Great Lakes.

**Defending Our Great Lakes Act (H.R. 1135; S. 589):** Co-sponsored by Great Lakes Task Force Co-Chairs Sen. Debbie Stabenow (MI) and Rep. Candice Miller (MI-10). Authorizes construction of technology and control at the Brandon Rd Lock and Dam to provide one-way protection against invasive species moving from the Mississippi River to the Great Lakes through the Chicago Area Waterway System.

## FY2016 Appropriations

The Great Lakes Task Forces has begun circulating letters of support for Great Lakes programs. These letters, signed by fellow members of Congress, will be sent to the Appropriations Committee Leadership to signify Congressional support.

Led by Rep. Sander Levin (MI-09), David Joyce (OH-14), and Louise Slaughter (NY-25), a letter supporting \$300 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in FY2016 has been circulating since January. This request would maintain current funding for the GLRI program, and be an increase of \$50 million above the President's request. Additional letters of general support for programs across five

appropriations bills are also now circulating on the House side. As additional letters circulate, NEMWI will post. Letters are due to Appropriations Committees starting around March 20.

## BRIEFING RECAP: Asian Carp 2014 and 2015 — Great Lakes and Beyond

On Tuesday, February 24, the NEMWI hosted a Capitol Hill briefing on Asian carp research, monitoring, and removal efforts in 2014 and planned efforts for 2015. Speakers from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) described efforts to prevent Asian carp from moving into the Great Lakes region, including testing of new technologies, evaluation of options at the Brandon Rd Lock and Dam, commercial fishing efforts, and consensus-

building activities among regional stakeholders. Further, speakers discussed the [recent report to Congress](#), detailing efforts ongoing and planned within the Ohio River and Upper Mississippi River Basins to implement the 2014 Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) requirements. These efforts will push out lessons learned in the Great Lakes to these other regions in need of Asian carp monitoring and control efforts. An overview of the budget for the Asian carp efforts show fairly level funding over the past years, with increased support from agency base budgets rather than through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, which can provide longer-term stability and broader geographical applications.

For [presentation materials](#) and a [recording of the webinar](#), please see the links above.



Asian carp from previous Great Lakes Congressional Breakfast

## Great Lakes Congressional Breakfast

The 2015 Great Lakes Congressional Breakfast, co-sponsored by the NEMWI and the Great Lakes Commission, featured ten Congressional members and showcased the high level of bipartisan support and efforts for the Great Lakes. NEMWI President Michael Goff and GLC Board Chair Kelly Burch kicked off the breakfast, discussing the continued partnership among the organizations and the benefits of the Great Lakes stakeholders working togeth-

er to promote the region. Approximately, 110 regional leaders and stakeholders attended the event, which continued despite the “weather” challenges of an inch of snow in the Washington, DC region. Northeast-Midwest Congressional Coalition Co-Chair, Rep. Mike Kelly (PA-03) kicked off the event, followed by Great Lakes Task Force Co-Chairs, Rep. Sean Duffy (WI-07) and Sens. Mark Kirk (IL) and Debbie Stabenow (MI). All members highlighted the importance of the Great Lakes to the region and the high level of bipartisan support. Speakers also included Great Lakes Task Force members Reps. David Joyce (OH-14), Mike Quigley (IL-05), and Debbie Dingell (MI-12), and delegation members Sens. Gary Peters (MI), Tammy Baldwin (WI), and Joe Donnelly (IN).



NEMWI President Michael Goff, welcoming attendees at the 2015 Great Lakes Congressional Breakfast

# Great Lakes Note

Invasive species in the Great Lakes motivate strong reactions within the region. Whether discussing sea lamprey, zebra mussels, or the Asian carp species, the issue is high on the minds of regional stakeholders and Congressional members and staff. Garrison Keillor and the *Prairie Home Companion* show took a few laughs in February at Asian carp and potential ways to combat their invasion—Navy Seals anyone?

To hear the story, go to the [link](#), click on the “SFX” segment; the commentary on Asian carp begins around 2:58.



**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.**

Danielle Chesky  
Director, Great Lakes Washington Program  
[dchesky@nemw.org](mailto:dchesky@nemw.org)  
202.464.4012



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