

Great Lakes Hill Happenings

MARCH 2015

UPCOMING EVENTS

Invasive Species
Success Stories –
They Exist!
Thursday, April 16
10-11:00 AM
Longworth House
Office Building,
Room 1310
[WEBINAR Option](#)

Nutrient Trading –
can it help make
the lake less green?
Monday, April 27
Time and Location
TBD

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Great Lakes Bipartisan Efforts Support Funding

The Great Lakes Task Forces have come together to support funding requests for regionally-relevant programs, like the State Revolving Funds, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, and maritime transportation. As noted in the recent NEMWI Weekly Update (click to receive), the following letters have gone out, supporting important programs within the Great Lakes region:

- [Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program \(House\)](#) ([Senate](#)) - Labor, Health and Human Services, Education
- [Community Development Block Grants](#) - Transportation, Housing and Urban Development
- [Economic Development Administration](#) - Commerce, Justice, Science
- [Manufacturing Extension Partnership](#) - Commerce, Justice, Science
- [National Network for Manufacturing Innovation](#) - Commerce, Justice, Science
- [Trade Adjustment Assistance for Firms](#) - Commerce, Justice, Science
- [Great Lakes Restoration Initiative](#) - Interior and Environment
- Great Lakes Task Force Letters (by Appropriations Subcommittee):
 - * [Commerce, Justice, Science](#): NOAA Programs and the Great Lakes Observing System
 - * [Interior and Environment](#): State Revolving Funds, Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, Asian carp and other invasive species efforts, and others
 - * [Energy and Water](#): U.S. Army Corps of Engineers programs, including operation and maintenance for navigation, habitat restoration, and stream modeling
 - * [State and Foreign Operations](#): Great Lakes Fishery Commission and the International Joint Commission
 - * [Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development](#): St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation

As discussions around the budget, sequestration (again), and overall spending continue to develop, these letters and support will inform federal funding decisions.



Legislative Updates



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

Crude-By-Rail Safety Act (S. 859): Co-sponsors include Great Lakes Task Force Member Sen. Tammy Baldwin (WI).

Requires PHMSA standards for volatility of gases in crude oil hauled by rail; Bans use of older tank cars (DOT-111s and unjacketed CPC-1232s); Requires new tank car design safety standards; Increases fines for hazardous materials laws violations; Authorizes funding for

first responder training, equipment and emergency preparedness; Authorizes funding for increased rail inspections and energy product testing; Requires comprehensive oil spill response plans for trains carrying oil, petroleum and other hazardous products; Establish a confidential “close-call” reporting system for employees to anonymously report problems; Requires railroads to disclose crude-by-rail move-

ments to State Emergency Response Commissions and Local Emergency Planning Committees along hazmat rail routes. Introduction of the bill follows a letter sent by Sen. Baldwin and 20 others, including Great Lakes Task Force Members Sen. Chuck Schumer (NY), Dick Durbin (IL), and delegation member Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (NY), to appropriators supporting funding for safety efforts.

President’s FY2016 Budget

NEMWI continued its review of the President's FY2016 Budget and its impact on the Northeast-Midwest region, hosting a webinar on March 12. The webinar began with opening remarks by NEMWI's new President, Dr. Michael Goff, followed by insight on regional implications of the President's Budget from NEMWI staff members in the areas of economic and workforce development, water infrastructure, aquatic resource protection and restoration, waterborne transportation, energy assistance, climate resilience, and neighborhood revitalization. Sam Breene, Legislative Director of the NEMW Congressional Coalition, provided remarks on regional priorities for the upcoming appropriations season and listed the programs for which members

of the Coalition are writing letters of support this year.

A recording of the full webinar is available [here](#). Webinar slides are available [here](#) and the full report on which the webinar was based is available [here](#).



US Geological Survey R/V Sturgeon in port at Navy Pier, Chicago, Illinois.

BRIEFING RECAP: The Army Corps' Role in the Great Lakes



On Monday, March 23, the NEMWI hosted a Capitol Hill briefing, entitled "[The Army Corps' Role in the Great Lakes](#)." The briefing featured Michael O'Bryan from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who gave attendees an overview of the Army Corps' presence and work in the Great Lakes region. He

highlighted the connectedness and interdependence of the ports in the Great Lakes Navigation System, and its designation of a system within the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014. The Corps also highlighted the importance of key system points, including the Soo Locks where a 30-day closure would result in an estimated economic impact of \$160 million. The Corps is currently reviewing an analysis of the benefits of the Soo Locks and possible solutions should the biggest lock, the Poe Lock, shut down. Mark Barker, President of the Interlake Steamship Company and Chair of the Lake Carriers Association, discussed the efficiency of the maritime system, and thus the importance of maintaining the Great Lakes Navigation System to maximize transportation and economic growth in the re-

gion. The shipping industry measures delays in 15-minute increments, further highlighting the potential economic impacts of closure of any key part of the system, like the Soo Locks. Jim Weakley, President of the Lake Carriers Association, noted that budgeting for the Great Lakes as a system, similar to the Mississippi River, would be desirable and focus on the interdependence of the ports.

Great Lakes Note

The Great Lakes are known for their namesake—their waters. The lakes, as many Great Lakes constituents know, provide drinking water to over 40 million people. The lakes also provide water for many industries, a huge draw to our region. These resources are a part of the reason the region is now the third largest economy in the world, up from #4, according to World Business Chicago. For craft beer lovers, the region's support of beer-making is an especially personal draw. The region boasts over XXXX craft beer makers, according to the Craft Beer Association. Many of these institutions support work within their communities and broader efforts to keep the lake water clean and maintain their business. Beers named after regional events, landmarks, and such further connect the drinks to the region. The [Edmund Fitzgerald Porter](#) has a special story of how it got its name, after that tragic event forty years ago.



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.

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Strengthening the Region that Sustains the Nation