

# Great Lakes Hill Happenings

JULY 2015



## UPCOMING EVENTS

**BRIEFING:**  
Water Data to  
Answer Urgent  
Water Policy Questions: Harmful Algal  
Blooms, Agriculture, and Lake Erie  
Tuesday, July 14  
10 AM  
Capitol Visitor  
Center, SVC-209  
RSVP:  
[dchesky@nemw.org](mailto:dchesky@nemw.org)

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## Active June for Great Lakes Leaders

Great Lakes leaders have been busy with appropriations moving through the House and Senate Chambers, making for an active June and an anticipated active July. From securing level funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative at \$300 million to including several Great Lakes provisions in spending and policy bills dealing with pollution, invasive species, and oil spills, the Great Lakes Task Forces have been especially active. See inside for further updates!

## NEMWI to Host Water Monitoring Briefing

Following the release of NEMWI's [study](#) on water quality monitoring in the Lake Erie drainage basin, the Institute will host a [Capitol Hill briefing](#) on July 14 to provide an overview of the study's findings and recommendations for improving water quality monitoring. Given recent announcements by the States of Ohio and Michigan and the Province of Ontario to reduce nutrient inputs by 40%, efficient, effective, and coordinated monitoring will be essential for evaluating management practices to improve the health of Lake Erie.

Record harmful algal blooms driven by nutrient loadings to Lake Erie have affected water quality, fish populations, tourism and the economy

across the entire Lake Erie region for the past several years, including the 2014 bloom that restricted drinking water for 400,000 Toledo-area (Ohio) residents. Agriculture is the dominant land use in the western Lake Erie drainage basin where nonpoint nutrient sources account for 71 percent of the nutrient load to Lake Erie (Ohio Lake Erie Phosphorus Task Force, 2010). Consequently, agricultural management practices are among the most important tools for reducing nutrient loads that lead to harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie. The Northeast-Midwest Institute evaluated whether current water quality monitoring in the Lake Erie drainage basin is adequate to measure the effectiveness of agricultural

management practices for improving the health of Lake Erie. The study results will be presented at the briefing, including recommendations for monitoring and coordination moving forward.

**When:** July 14, 2015, 10 AM

**Where:** Capitol Visitor Center, SVC-209

**Speakers:**

Elin Betanzo, Northeast-Midwest Institute  
Michael Goff, Northeast-Midwest Institute  
Lana Pollack, International Joint Commission  
Larry Antosch, Ohio Farm Bureau

**Honorary Sponsor:**

Sen. Sherrod Brown of Ohio

**RSVP:** [Danielle Chesky,](mailto:Danielle.Chesky@nemw.org)  
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# Legislative Updates



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

**U.S. Coast Guard Reauthorization Act (S. 1611):** Lead Co-sponsors include Sens. John Thune (R-SD), Marco Rubio (R-FL), Bill Nelson (D-FL) and Cory Booker (D-NJ); includes language allowing ballast discharge in future marine sanctuaries in the Great Lakes (like that under consideration for Lake Michigan); also includes the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act, added as an amendment during Committee markup, which would establish a singular national standard for ballast discharge under the U.S. Coast Guard and remove EPA and state jurisdiction over ballast discharge regulations—this provision was not included in the

House version; Sens. Gary Peters (D-MI) and Ron Johnson (R-WI) included an amendment requiring Coast Guard and NOAA to provide a report within 2 years on oil spill research and response capabilities within freshwater, specifically in relation to cleaning up a spill in the Great Lakes.

House version (**H.R. 1987**), which **PASSED by VOICE** in May, included an authorization for a new Great Lakes icebreaker. That same authorization was not included in the Senate version.

## BRIEFING RECAP: Asian Carp Framework 2015—Great Lakes, Ohio River & Upper Mississippi River Basins

NEMWI hosted a Capitol Hill briefing on the 2015 Asian Carp Framework, which was released the morning of the briefing, Thursday, June 30, 2015. Members from the federal agencies of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Geological Survey, and the Army Corps of Engineers presented the upcoming plans for 2015, as well as highlighted efforts ongoing in the Ohio and Upper Mississippi River Basins.

Highlights of the briefing included:

- Young carp were found about 33 miles closer than they have in the past, likely due to better spawning conditions and results (more carp babies survived). As such there will be more monitoring above and below the electrical barriers, and more removal efforts below the barriers.
- New technologies are continuously being developed to combat Asian carp specifically and invasive species in general, including microparticles (targeted poisons), attractants, and deterrents (CO<sub>2</sub>, air guns).
- Funding requested by the President for the base budgets (US Fish and Wildlife Service and US Geological Survey) included increases for Asian carp
- As a note, those increases are not included in the House mark for the Interior and Environment bill currently on the floor, and \$0.5 million was included in the Senate Committee bill for invasive species in general.
- Projects and funding underway in the Upper Mississippi and Ohio River basins are based on the successful ACRC model in the Great Lakes.

Slides and materials are available on the NEMWI website [here](#).

# FY2016 Appropriations

The House and Senate continued reviewing and planning the federal government's spending for FY2016. Active funding bills through the end of June are linked below, along with an NEMWI-produced summary, with some notable policy provisions highlighted.

## Energy and Water

Funds: Department of Energy and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Regional Significance: Supports maritime navigation and trade, as well as ecosystem restoration efforts and energy research and development

Status in [House](#): PASSED full House

Status in [Senate](#): Passed out of Committee

Policy Provisions: Open-lake disposal restrictions for Lake Erie (House) or in general (Senate); increased funding for Operations and Maintenance of Harbors and waterways; House provided \$10 million for Army Corps' Great Lakes Fishery and Ecosystem Restoration program (Rep. Sean Duffy (WI-07) floor amendment)

## Commerce, Justice, Science

Funds: Department of Commerce, including National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Regional Significance: Supports manufacturing programs and NOAA's observation and research efforts, including on algal blooms

Status in [House](#): PASSED full House

Status in [Senate](#): Passed out of Committee

Policy Provisions: Increased funding for NOAA's satellite program; includes funding for the Advanced Manufacturing Initiative and implementation of the Revitalize American Manufacturing and Innovation Act; funding also provided for coal-mining communities

## Transportation, Housing and Urban Development

Funds: Departments of Transportation and Housing and Urban Development

Regional Significance: Supports transportation infrastructure, including TIGER, as well as community development programs like Community Development Block Grants; St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corp.

Status in [House](#): PASSED full House

Status in [Senate](#): Passed out of Committee

Policy Provisions: Decreases in many programs including Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, Tenant-Based Rental Assistance, and Federal Railroad Administration; encourages a study on marine highway infrastructure and its impact on performance of national transportation

## Interior and Environment

Funds: Department of Interior and Environmental Protection Agency

Regional Significance: Supports U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and U.S. Geological Survey restoration, research, and monitoring; provides funding for Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, Brownfields, and State Revolving Funds

Status in [House](#): Under consideration on House floor

Status in [Senate](#): Passed out of Committee

Policy Provisions: Decreases in many EPA programs, though GLRI remained at \$300 M; level or decreased funding for many Interior programs though invasive species received a small bump in the Senate; policy riders for EPA rule-makings including Waters of the U.S.

# Great Lakes Note

The Northeast-Midwest Institute launched its new website in June, providing a more efficient way to access the news, events, and reports generated by its staff of experts. The most recent release, beyond the quick summaries of the appropriations bills, includes a study looking at the water monitoring within the western Lake Erie Basin, and whether monitoring is occurring in the right way and right places to tell if agricultural management practices are having an impact on the release of nutrients.

Come check out the website and its new features!



**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 follows in the goals of the Northeast-Midwest, 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*

