



**AMERICAN
GREAT LAKES PORTS
ASSOCIATION**

2019 Position Paper

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

Summary:

The Great Lakes include 20 percent of the world's surface freshwater and host a diverse ecosystem of aquatic and terrestrial life. Launched in 2010, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) was created to accelerate efforts to restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the Great Lakes Basin ecosystem. The GLRI seeks to replace earlier piecemeal approaches to ecosystem restoration with a single comprehensive program. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) leads and administers the restoration initiative and partners with multiple federal agencies to carry out restoration projects.

AGLPA Position:

Since 2010, Congress has appropriated \$2.5 billion to support the program's initiatives throughout the Great Lakes region. The FY2020 budget proposes to cut Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding by 90 percent - from the FY2019 appropriated level of \$300 million, to only \$30 million in FY2020. As stakeholders in a healthy, productive ecosystem, Great Lakes ports support the GLRI program and urge Congress to reject the Administration's proposal and include \$300 million in the EPA's FY2020 budget.

Additional Background:

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative replaces scores of earlier programs with a single, coordinated effort to proactively rehabilitate the Great Lakes. Both past and current practices have left these inland seas with a legacy of contamination, habitat loss and a compromised ecosystem. Although launched by President Obama in 2009, GLRI is a bi-partisan initiative built on a foundation of earlier work. A 2004 executive order by President Bush established a Great Lakes Interagency Task Force to coordinate federal agency actions related to Great Lakes restoration. In 2005, Great Lakes stakeholders (including AGLPA) worked to develop the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy, which outlines eight priority areas for restoration action.

President Obama proposed the creation of GLRI in his first budget and included \$475 million for its first year (FY2010). Led by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Interagency Task Force worked with stakeholders to develop a 5-year action plan to guide GLRI work between 2010-14. The Great Lakes Restoration Action Plan identifies five areas of focus: 1) toxic substances and areas of concern; 2) invasive species; 3) nearshore health & non-point source pollution; 4) habitat and wildlife protection/restoration; and 5) education, monitoring and

measuring/evaluating progress. In September, 2014, a second five year plan was announced by EPA. The new plan is a roadmap for action between 2015-19. EPA is currently developing the third action plan which will outline initiatives for 2020-24.

Since GLRI was launched, more than 4500 individual projects have been implemented across the Great Lakes region in these five focus areas. Projects have been carried out by federal agencies in partnership with states, counties, municipalities, universities and other stakeholders. These projects include several of particular interest to the maritime industry. For example, GLRI funding supports ongoing work at the Great Waters Research Collaborative, a ballast water treatment technology test center at the University of Wisconsin/Superior. GSI scientists and engineers are working to help accelerate the deployment of effective ballast water treatment technology for commercial vessels. GLRI funds have also been used to implement beneficial reuse projects for dredge material disposal, such as the Cat Island project in Green Bay. Of critical importance, GLRI funding is being used to control migration of non-native Asian Carp in the Illinois River and prevent their spread to Lake Michigan.