



# Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

## Frequently Asked Questions

The following are answers to key questions about the \$475 million Great Lakes Restoration Initiative included the President's proposed FY2010 budget. Additional background is available on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's website at <http://epa.gov/greatlakes/glri/index.html>.

### **How much money does the President's budget provide for Great Lakes restoration?**

The President's proposed FY2010 budget includes a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative that will invest \$475 million to confront some of the most serious threats to the region, including invasive species, nonpoint source pollution and toxic sediments. The Initiative will invest in proven, successful programs and build on existing partnerships with states, cities, tribes and nongovernmental entities. It is designed to significantly accelerate the pace of Great Lakes cleanup efforts. If fully funded, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, together with other key elements of the President's budget, will generate real, on-the-ground environmental improvements, protect public health and bolster our regional economy.

### **How does this compare to funding levels in previous years?**

The President's proposed FY2010 budget roughly doubles the investment in Great Lakes programs from the previous year<sup>1</sup>. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative does not address wastewater and drinking water infrastructure, which will continue to be supported under the existing Clean Water or Drinking Water State Revolving Fund programs. The President's budget includes an additional \$3.9 billion nationwide for these two programs, to be allocated per existing formulas to the states. In addition, the Initiative is intended to build on, but not take the place of, existing federal activities, and federal agencies will be expected to maintain base funding levels for their Great Lakes programs.

### **How does the Initiative address the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration's \$20 billion restoration blueprint?**

The Initiative directly addresses the key priorities in the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration restoration strategy. The federal agencies used the strategy to develop the spending plan for the Initiative, and pass-through grant funding will be targeted at achieving the Strategy's recommendations. The Initiative represents a significant down payment on a multi-year effort to fully implement the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration restoration strategy.

### **Who will oversee the Initiative?**

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative will be a multiagency effort led by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). It will be coordinated by the federal Interagency Great Lakes Task Force, which includes representatives from all of the federal agencies involved in Great Lakes restoration and management activities. It also will build on the work of interagency teams that are already coordinating federal and state efforts directed at key issues, such as degraded habitat, toxic "hot spots," invasive species and contaminated beaches. EPA is expected to begin meeting soon with state agencies and other key stakeholders to develop additional details for managing the work and ensuring that it is aligned with states' and others' ongoing activities. These and other mechanisms will provide the necessary institutional, technical and policy infrastructure to effectively administer large-scale funding for Great Lakes restoration and ensure that the resulting activities are based on sound science and achieve measurable outcomes. The Great Lakes states are committed to working with EPA to implement effective mechanisms to monitor progress, ensure accountability, and achieve on-the-ground results.

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<sup>1</sup> It is assumed that federal agencies will continue their base level funding of Great Lakes activities, estimated at \$550 million in FY08, in addition to activities under the new Initiative. The Great Lakes states are also expected to receive funding through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, estimated at \$871 million based on current state allocation formulas.

### **How will the money be distributed?**

Funds will be allocated strategically to implement both federal programs and projects implemented by states, tribes, municipalities, universities, and other organizations. EPA will transfer portions of the appropriated funding to federal agencies for distribution through existing programs. It is estimated that 60 percent or more of the funding will be distributed to nonfederal entities through existing grants, contracts and new arrangements. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is specifically targeted at the following priorities:

- Cleaning up toxic substances and Areas of Concern (\$147 million)
- Preventing or removing aquatic invasive species (\$60 million)
- Improving nearshore health and preventing nonpoint source pollution (\$98 million)
- Restoring and protecting habitat and wildlife (\$105 million)
- Evaluating and monitoring progress (\$65 million).

### **Is the region prepared to spend this money?**

The Great Lakes region is more than ready to implement on-the-ground restoration activities. Building on years of research, monitoring and planning, the Great Lakes region has collaborated to build a comprehensive strategy for solving the problems affecting the lakes. Developed with input from more than 1,500 stakeholders, the 2005 *Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes* identifies priorities, defines problems, outlines solutions, and provides clear goals and objectives for measuring progress. The Strategy is accepted by government agencies, business and industry, conservation groups, and environmental organizations as the primary blueprint for cleaning up the Great Lakes. In addition, several of the Great Lakes states have developed plans for addressing Great Lakes problems within their jurisdiction. Each of the 30 U.S. Areas of Concern – or “toxic hot spots” – has cleanup plans and measurable, science-based restoration targets. Other plans are in place for specific priorities, such as restoring and conserving fisheries and waterfowl habitat, and controlling aquatic invasive species. States, cities and nongovernmental entities are already investing significant resources in protection and restoration activities. A recent study found that Great Lakes cities in the U.S. are spending \$11 billion annually to protect and restore the Great Lakes. The region is prepared to use additional funding from the federal government to accelerate progress, address the highest priorities and produce measurable, on-the-ground improvements for the environment and the economy.

### **Have specific restoration projects been identified?**

Federal agencies have identified an array of high-value projects to implement under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. In some cases the funding will support restoration proposals submitted under existing federal programs that were not implemented due to lack of funding. Much of the funding will be administered through competitive grant programs targeted at specific restoration priorities. Most federal Great Lakes programs have never been fully funded, so there is a significant backlog of strong restoration proposals awaiting implementation. For example, NOAA received 109 proposals for Great Lakes habitat restoration projects, requesting nearly \$300 million under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. These and many other critical restoration projects can be considered “shovel ready” for FY2010. Other projects are identified in state-specific restoration plans as well as cleanup plans for the 30 U.S. Areas of Concern.

### **What are the benefits of Great Lakes restoration?**

The Brookings Institution has estimated that implementing the Great Lakes restoration strategy in full will generate \$50 billion in long-term benefits. A coalition of more than 30 metropolitan Chambers of Commerce in the region has highlighted Great Lakes restoration as a critical component of a larger agenda for creating jobs and revitalizing our regional economy. Areas where cleanups have been completed are planning important waterfront redevelopment projects. Cleaning up contaminated sediments, alone, is projected to increase coastal property values by \$12 billion to \$19 billion. Boating, fishing, hunting and wildlife watching in the Great Lakes region generate over \$50 billion in economic activity annually and support hundreds of thousands of jobs. Abundant freshwater, recreational amenities and other benefits from the Great Lakes will be vital for attracting new industries and young workers in the future. The Great Lakes give our region a unique, competitive advantage in attracting jobs and investment in a global economy. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative provides an unprecedented opportunity to create jobs, stimulate economic development and invest in our nation’s freshwater resources that will be central to the future of the Great Lakes region.