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NATURAL RESOURCE LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES JOIN TOGETHER TO STRENGTHEN INTER-JURISDICTIONAL COORDINATION THROUGHOUT THE GREAT LAKES BASIN

***State, provincial, tribal, and federal representatives come together to
bolster response to aquatic invasive species and wildlife crime***

ANN ARBOR, MI—Today, representatives from law enforcement agencies throughout the Great Lakes basin began a week-long conference focused on strengthening the region's response to aquatic invasive species (AIS). Michigan Department of Natural Resources' Chief of Law Enforcement, Gary Hagler, kicked off the landmark event stating: "Cooperative enforcement and training efforts across all states, provinces as well as the United States and Canadian governments is vital in protecting this resource. It will take this level of cooperation and collaboration from now and into the future to ensure these resources are protected for future generations." Chief Hagler also recognized the critical role conservation officers fulfill as the first, and strongest, line of defense to protect the Great Lakes.

In October 2017, the governors and premiers of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Basin committed to strengthening law enforcement agencies' capacity to prevent the introduction and spread of AIS by adopting *A Resolution to Enhance Regional Protections against Aquatic Invasive Species*. The resolution was developed in cooperation with the Great Lakes Law Enforcement Committee and the signatory agencies to the Memorandum of Understanding on Regional Cooperative Enforcement Operations. Both groups comprise conservation officers and other law enforcement personnel from the myriad agencies that share fishery and wildlife management responsibilities across the basin.

Throughout the week, participants will develop strategic approaches to enhance inter-jurisdictional law enforcement that targets aquatic invasive species, illegal harvest (e.g. poaching), cyber-crime and smuggling, and endangered and threatened fauna and flora species protections. Officers also will complete a full-day instructional session on major case management for multi-jurisdictional investigations.

By adopting *A Resolution to Enhance Regional Protections against Aquatic Invasive Species*, the governors and premiers of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Basin commit to:

GREAT LAKES FISHERY COMMISSION

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- Harmonize, where possible, the objectives of various state and provincial (AIS) regulations to eliminate regulatory gaps and strengthen the basin-wide approach to AIS prevention and enforcement.
- Evaluate current regulatory approaches and regulations as well as existing fines and penalties for possessing, transporting, selling, purchasing, and introducing AIS.
- Develop a regional framework to ensure a commensurate approach to AIS prevention.
- Expand the Governors' and Premiers' list of "Least Wanted AIS."
- Improve information sharing among and within jurisdictions, including developing consistent and routine reporting processes.
- Join the Memorandum of Understanding on Regional Cooperative Enforcement Operations, which facilitates information sharing and cross-jurisdictional investigations.
- Expand technology deployment and training to assist state and provincial personnel in identifying and tracking AIS and offenders.
- Enhance administrative capacity to enforce laws such as through the development of AIS-specific enforcement units or specialists in each jurisdiction.

The Great Lakes Fishery Commission's Executive Secretary, Robert Lambe, expressed the Commission's gratitude to attendees for prioritizing AIS enforcement: "The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Basin consists of more than 100,000 square miles of shared waters and supports a fishery that is worth more than \$7 billion annually. The spread of AIS constitutes one of the greatest threats to the future of the Great Lakes and its world-class fishery. We must coordinate our efforts across this ecologically and politically complex region, because we know fish and people alike move across borders freely."

"Law enforcement efforts in the Great Lakes basin have increasingly focused on the unlawful movement of invasive species throughout the region," said Robert Stroess, vice-chair of the Great Lakes Law Enforcement Committee and an investigative lieutenant with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. "The governors' and premiers' resolution provides much needed support to conservation officers to identify and respond to illegal activities that increase the risk of introduction and spread of invasive species. We are all here because we believe effective law enforcement will be integral to preventing future introductions."