



Great Lakes Fishery Commission

ESTABLISHED BY CONVENTION BETWEEN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES TO IMPROVE AND PERPETUATE FISHERY RESOURCES

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GREAT LAKES FISHERY COMMISSION DEEPLY ENCOURAGED BY ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION LEGISLATION

DeWine/Levin, Emanuel/Reynolds bills focus badly needed attention on Great Lakes restoration

Ann Arbor, MI—The Great Lakes Fishery Commission today commended authors of recently introduced Great Lakes legislation for focusing Congressional attention on the need for a comprehensive Great Lakes restoration effort. The legislation—introduced concurrently by Senators Mike DeWine and Carl Levin and Representatives Rahm Emanuel and Tom Reynolds—underscore the fact that the Great Lakes need the help of federal and state governments if they are to be improved today and sustained for the future.

“The Great Lakes are a national treasure that define our region, supply us with drinking water, and provide income and recreational opportunities for millions of people,” said Commissioner Bernie Hansen. “The lakes comprise one-fifth of the world’s surface freshwater and support a multi-billion-dollar fishery. It is up to us to do everything we can to protect and restore these invaluable resources.”

Although significant progress has been made in cleaning up and protecting the Great Lakes, a recent report by the General Accounting Office (GAO) concluded that binational, federal, and state strategies to restore the lakes are underfunded and not coordinated as well as they should be. The report points out that restoration efforts in other regions of the country—particularly efforts to protect the Everglades and the Chesapeake Bay—are more sophisticated than restoration efforts in the Great Lakes region and are guided by more effective strategies. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission concurs with the GAO’s conclusions and has strongly supported the development of a Great Lakes restoration strategy.

Hansen continued: “Legislation introduced in Congress this week is designed to draw Congress’ attention to the Great Lakes and to call for a coordinated Great Lakes restoration effort. It is critically important that agencies at all levels work toward this common goal. It is clear to the commission that programs to protect the Great Lakes, while certainly effective on many fronts, can be greatly improved by enhanced coordination among the agencies and a heightened commitment to funding. We can learn many lessons from how restoration efforts in the Everglades and the Chesapeake Bay have been implemented; lessons we can apply to the Great Lakes.”

Hansen concluded: “We are very pleased to see a strong commitment in this legislation to create a restoration plan for the Great Lakes and to dramatically increase funding to restore the ecosystem. The people of our region, and the resource itself, deserve nothing less.”

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