



**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER AND WILDLIFE
JOINT HEARING
“LEGISLATIVE APPROACHES TO PROTECTING, PRESERVING, AND
RESTORING GREAT WATER BODIES”
WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 24, 2010
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TESTIMONY OF DAVID A. ULLRICH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
GREAT LAKES AND ST. LAWRENCE CITIES INITIATIVE**

Good morning distinguished leadership and members of the Subcommittee. I am David Ullrich, Executive Director of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative. Thank you for providing me this opportunity to speak. We are a coalition of 70 U.S. and Canadian cities with over 13 million population dedicated to the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence. We seek a long term, sustainable future for the region by finding the best possible balance among environmental, economic and social elements on the local level. Local governments from the U.S. and Canada along the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence are investing over \$15 billion annually to advance this agenda.

We are very pleased with the introduction of this legislation designed to advance the protection and restoration of the great waters of the United States. I will direct my attention to the provisions relating to the Great Lakes and focus on the proposed governance and management structure in the bill.



Many people have dedicated themselves to this effort over the years, much money has been invested, and much progress has been made. At the same time, the magnitude of the problems and increasing complexity of the challenges mean that much more remains to be done. One especially important step we can take as we go forward is to streamline the management and governance structure and improve its effectiveness. The fundamental problem is that there are so many people involved from so many different agencies of several orders of government, and no one has the overall authority, accountability, and responsibility for directing the effort. It is further complicated because these are international waters. In addition, there is no single plan or strategy that lays out a long term vision for the future, clear goals and measurable objectives, and actions to be taken by designated parties within established timeframes. Also, because of the very informed and committed environmental community in the Great Lakes, there must be a way to engage them at all steps of the process.

The key principles that should be applied for any future structure are:

- Simplicity, flexibility, and efficiency
- Transparent and open to the public
- Emphasis on tangible actions
- Accountability for actions that bring resource improvement
- Compatibility with international structures and relationships
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The proposed two tiered management structure in the bill is fully consistent with these principles. The first tier is the Great Lakes Leadership Council, with high



level political leadership at the federal, state, local, and tribal levels providing policy direction, setting goals and objectives, establishing priorities, reporting progress, and building consensus. The leadership responsibility for the GL Leadership Council is placed with the EPA Administrator as Chair, providing clear accountability with a political appointee. Having the secretaries and administrators, governors, mayors, and tribal chairs on the Council provide clear direction to the career staff on an annual basis, and check progress on projects, programs, and environmental improvement on a regular basis will go a long way toward accelerating the work that needs to be done. Representatives from the various commissions that oversee work on the Great Lakes, as well as a Canadian representative, would serve as observers to the process to provide a connection to their own efforts and an independent perspective on the work of the Council. Importantly, all the right people would be in the same room at the same time. Also, oversight from the legislative bodies that appropriate funds for the projects and programs will contribute to a higher level of accountability.

The second tier, the Great Lakes Management Committee, provides direction to the planning, assessment, and reporting efforts, along with tracking and assisting with implementation. This group would include senior managers from government agencies, commissions, stakeholder groups, and others with in depth knowledge of the resource and the programs and projects designed to improve it. Leadership for this work is provided at the political level from U.S. EPA. It is this GL Management Committee that can provide the critical link to much more work happening on the ground. Although more funding is always needed, more can be accomplished with more effective management structures,



In order for the GL Leadership Council and GL Management Committee to be effective, there needs to be a single plan for the Great Lakes that sets out the vision, goals, and objectives, along with the programs and projects designed to address the problems faced. The Great Lakes Plan must set out who is responsible for implementing the programs and projects and the time frames for action. However, we do not need a new, extended planning process for this purpose. Extensive planning has gone on in the past, and we need to move forward with action. The key elements of the recently released Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Action Plan, along with the Lakewide Management Plans completed under the Water Quality Agreement, and the 2005 Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy provide most of the elements for a Great Lakes Plan. Some states, tribes, and local governments also have their own plans that can be a source of additional actions. The primary additions needed in the Great Lakes Plan are the designation of agencies having the lead responsibilities for actions, as well as timeframes for initiating and completing the work. Ongoing review of the work to make sure it is proceeding on schedule, along with monitoring and assessment of the environmental results, is essential to make sure the work is accomplishing the desired outcomes.

There are no magic formulas for success, but the three key elements of a policy level council, a strong management group, and an action oriented plan can bring much more direction, accountability, and results to the work on the Great Lakes. Obviously, investments are needed to make all of this happen, but a more effective management and governance structure can go a long way toward making more out of the funding available.



Other key provisions in the bill will also contribute significantly to strengthening the Great Lakes programs in the future. The formal establishment of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the Great Lakes Interagency Task Force are important parts of the institutional infrastructure for the Great Lakes. The GLRI can become the long term, broad scale funding source for programs and projects in the future. The Interagency Task Force is where the Federal government can work through the many issues that must be addressed to integrate multiple programs and agencies and make them more compatible. Federal legislation is not needed, and would not be appropriate, for similar actions at the state, local, and tribal levels. States have their Council of Great Lakes Governors and Great Lakes Commission, cities have the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, and the tribes their various councils, commissions, and associations to work through the issues for their governmental bodies. Likewise, the stakeholder groups also have groups to formulate policies and positions to represent their perspectives.

Thank you again for providing me this opportunity to bring the local government perspective to Congress. This legislation presents a major step forward for the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes and its long term sustainability.