



GREAT LAKES AND ST. LAWRENCE
CITIES INITIATIVE
L'ALLIANCE DES VILLES
DES GRANDS LACS ET DU SAINT-LAURENT

Support for U.S. Federal Economic Investments in Water Restoration Priorities for Great Lakes Coastal Communities

February 2021

*A Resolution Submitted by the
Mayor of Milwaukee, Wisconsin*



WHEREAS, the Covid-19 pandemic has devastated the economy of cities across the Great Lakes basin, with additional expenses and ongoing diminished revenues to state and municipal governments likely to further constrain public services, prolong economic damage, and slow full recovery; and

WHEREAS, the Biden Administration has made economic recovery, infrastructure development and environmental issues top priorities in its first one hundred days; and

WHEREAS, economists, business leaders and elected officials recognize the need for continued economic stimulus efforts to create jobs, generate long-term economic activity and accelerate the pace of recovery, particularly in hard-hit cities; and

WHEREAS, with nearly one-third of U.S. economic activity centered in the Great Lakes region, its economic recovery can fuel the larger, national economic recovery; and

WHEREAS, investing in water infrastructure is one of the most cost-effective ways to stimulate economic activity, with every job added in the water and wastewater industry projected to create an additional 3.68 jobs in the national economy, and every million dollars in State Revolving Fund spending generating \$2.95 million in economic activity; and

WHEREAS, the Great Lakes states have identified more than \$12 billion in priority water infrastructure projects that are awaiting funding and are ready for implementation in 2020, including at least 39 projects in U.S. Great Lakes coastal communities that require \$465 million; and

WHEREAS, coastal communities across the Great Lakes region are heavily impacted by erosion, flooding and other effects from high lake levels and extreme weather events, with historically high lake levels predicted to persist until the region experiences dry conditions for up to several years; and

WHEREAS, water equity is a major concern, which is exacerbated by aging and failing water infrastructure that results in communities in need not receiving quality and healthy water supplies; and

WHEREAS, climate change is projected to bring more frequent severe storm events that will compound impacts from high water levels and flooding, with 100-year storm events already happening every 20 years, on average; and

WHEREAS, coastal communities in the U.S. and Canada have experienced more than \$500 million in damages over the past year and the U.S. members of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative have identified 14 projects requiring approximately \$62 million to repair damage from, and build resilience to, coastal erosion, flooding and other impacts from high lake levels and climate change; and

WHEREAS, investments in resilience, mitigation and ecosystem restoration are estimated to return more than \$6.00 for every \$1.00 spent and create 39 jobs per \$1 million spent, and historically, every dollar spent on flood risk management by the Army Corps of Engineers has prevented nearly \$10 in damages; and

WHEREAS, many cities do not have the resources to match traditional federal and state cost-share requirements to receive funding for important infrastructure projects.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative calls for continued action to protect 20 percent of the world's fresh surface water and the drinking water source for 40 million people; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative urges the Biden Administration and Congress to provide additional economic relief for struggling cities and support critical water resource priorities by

- Providing emergency financial relief to Great Lakes cities to sustain vital public services
- Safeguarding drinking water by addressing toxins and pollution in our water systems (lead levels, Algae blooms and nutrients, PFAS/PFOS, Micro Plastic, etc.)
- Advancing equity in water services by ensuring stable, predictable funding for utilities to allow them to provide safe and affordable drinking water – with a focus on at risk communities
- Passing an infrastructure package to modernize water systems
- Sustaining Great Lakes restoration and revitalization
- Helping Great Lakes cities strengthen coastal resilience and respond to impacts from climate change and work with the Government of Canada where appropriate to ensure coordinated efforts through out the watershed.
- Protecting the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River from Asian carp and other destructive invasive species
- Strengthening the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Navigation System and work with the Canadian Government where necessary to ensure coordinated efforts.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative requests that any non-federal cost-share requirements be waived or minimized to accommodate the fiscal constraints facing state and local governments, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative requests that federal requirements for future CARES or relief funds be simplified to allow for communities to immediately access funds for the initiation of these projects, and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, the citizens of the Great Lakes basin appreciate the federal support provided so far to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and urge further action to ensure a quick and complete economic recovery while addressing urgent needs to rebuild our water infrastructure and protect our coastal areas.