



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Illinois Leaders Unite to Bolster Coastal Resilience at Illinois Leadership Luncheon

Cities Initiative Hosts Event to Strengthen Coastal Resilience on Illinois' Lake Michigan Shoreline

Deerfield, IL – November 1, 2024 – The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative hosted the RCPI Illinois Leadership Luncheon this week, convening local leaders, environmental experts, and coastal stakeholders to celebrate the achievements of the Resilient Coastal Projects Initiative (RCPI) and to map out a shared vision for enhancing resilience along the Illinois Lake Michigan shoreline.

The luncheon brought together leaders from municipalities across Illinois, including notable remarks from Mayor Leon Rockingham of North Chicago, Mayor Billy McKinney of Zion, and Mayor Ann B. Taylor's office from Waukegan. Various Illinois District Representatives also spoke alongside staff from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and partners from Stantec. Together, they provided an exclusive look at the recently developed Illinois North Shore Coastal Resilience Plan, a data-driven framework designed to address issues such as shoreline erosion, flooding, and habitat degradation.

"Communities along Illinois' Lake Michigan shoreline face increasing threats from climate change, with stronger storms, rising lake levels, and accelerated erosion posing risks to homes, infrastructure, and natural habitats," said Jonathan Altenberg, President and CEO of the Cities Initiative. "The RCPI provides local leaders with practical and innovative strategies to counter these impacts, safeguarding our coastlines and ensuring a resilient future for generations to come."

The event celebrated an initial draft release of a report, the Illinois North Shore Coastal Resilience Plan, developed through a partnership between the Cities Initiative, IDNR, Stantec, Baird, and funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). The report identifies key vulnerabilities and offers sustainable resilience strategies to address climate-related hazards affecting the Illinois lakeshore.

The RCPI Illinois Leadership Luncheon underscored the essential role of collaborative action among communities, organizations, and funding partners in protecting Illinois' Lake Michigan shoreline. The Cities Initiative's Resilient Coastal Projects Initiative remains committed to supporting Illinois municipalities in developing and implementing coastal resilience strategies to foster a sustainable, resilient future for the region.



"Protecting the Great Lakes and our coastal lands is more than just an environmental responsibility—it's an investment in the well-being and future of our communities. Our shoreline supports everything from recreation and natural habitats to critical infrastructure and economic vitality," said Joyce Mason, State Representative, IL-61. I am deeply grateful for the visionary leadership of the Cities Initiative and the commitment of all stakeholders who have come together to make this Coastal Resilience Plan a reality. Together, we are paving the way for a sustainable and resilient future for Illinois."

"Solving the challenges facing our Lake Michigan shoreline requires a shared commitment from all levels of government. This isn't an issue that can be tackled by the federal government alone—the State of Illinois plays a vital role in bringing resources and support to our communities," said Bob Morgan, State Representative, IL-58. Through collaboration with local leaders, environmental experts, and organizations like the GLSLCI, we are making meaningful strides to protect our coast and ensure a resilient future for all who call this region home."

For more information about the RCPI and the Illinois North Shore Coastal Resilience Plan, please contact Zoë Kuntze, Coastal Programs Manager, at zoe.kuntze@glslcities.org.

About the Resilient Coastal Projects Initiative (RCPI)

The RCPI supports local communities in planning sustainable, fundable projects that protect shorelines and community assets. These projects address coastal hazards like flooding or erosion, while adding community benefits such as public spaces, recreation, wildlife habitat, and improved water quality. More information on the Resilient Coastal Projects Initiative is available on the Cities Initiative's [website](https://glslcities.org/initiatives/resilient-coastal-projects-initiative) (<https://glslcities.org/initiatives/resilient-coastal-projects-initiative>).

About the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is a multinational coalition of U.S. and Canadian mayors, and chief elected officials dedicated to the environmental, social and economic health of communities in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin. With more than 260 members, the Cities Initiative is the largest local government driven organization in the basin focused on issues impacting residents.

Media Contact

Christine Maydossian
Director of Government Relations
Leliken Strategy Advisors
cmaydossian@leliken.com