

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Coastal Resilience Projects Underway with Federal and Local Support

Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative and Local Leaders Launch Preliminary Design Efforts to Strengthen Shorelines and Safeguard Infrastructure

CHICAGO, IL — August 6, 2025 — The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (Cities Initiative), in partnership with local leaders and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, has launched a new round of shoreline resilience projects aimed at addressing erosion, flooding, and storm-related damage along the Great Lakes. These preliminary design projects are supported by federal funding and mark the next phase in the Cities Initiative's ongoing Resilient Coastal Projects Initiative (RCPI).

Communities participating in this round of design work include:

- Toledo, OH
- Dunkirk, NY
- Grand Marais, MN
- Sheboygan, WI
- Waukegan, IL

These new efforts build upon previous RCPI support, advancing community-driven projects from initial scoping toward shovel-ready design. Backed by significant federal investment, this work represents a critical milestone in strengthening coastal resilience across the Great Lakes region, addressing coastal flooding and erosion while restoring natural habitats, improving water quality, and enhancing public access to vulnerable shorelines. The funding supports sustainable solutions to long-standing challenges such as eroding bluffs, failing infrastructure, degraded ecosystems, and community health and safety concerns. While these projects are currently in the design phase, they lay the essential groundwork for future implementation and long-term regional resilience, underscoring the importance of continued federal investment in Great Lakes communities.

Dunkirk, NY — Wright Park Beach Shoreline Naturalization and Protection Project: This project will design solutions to restore and protect the shoreline, bluffs, and habitat at Wright Park Beach, located on Lake Erie in Dunkirk, NY. The beach is a top recreational destination for city residents,



but erosion from stormwater, high lake levels, and extreme waves—some reaching 30 feet—has severely impacted the area, damaged the nearby seawall, and threatened the city’s wastewater treatment plant. “Dunkirk’s waterfront is a vital asset for our community and it’s imperative that we take action to protect it from the increasing impacts from climate change,” said Mayor Kate Wdowiasz. “This project will safeguard critical infrastructure along our shoreline while enhancing important recreational opportunities for residents and visitors to our community.”

Sheboygan, WI — Northern Bluffs Shoreline Stabilization Project: The project will investigate solutions to address bluff erosion, stormwater runoff, and degraded protective structures along a four-mile stretch of shoreline north of downtown. Proposed approaches include bluff toe protection, beach nourishment, and expanded public access trails. “It’s critical that we take action to safeguard this section of our Lake Michigan shoreline before it’s too late. Climate change is only worsening threats to city infrastructure, homes and community amenities in this area. This project will develop sustainable solutions to protect the most vulnerable stretch of our shoreline,” said Mayor Ryan Sorenson.

Waukegan, IL — Waukegan River Ravines Corridor Improvements Project: This project will design solutions to stabilize eroding ravines, enhance habitat, and improve recreational access along four miles of the Waukegan River ravine corridor. Design plans will include native plantings, invasive species removal, improved trails, and educational signage. “The Waukegan River Ravines Corridor Improvements Project is an important step toward restoring one of our city’s most treasured natural habitats,” said Mayor Sam Cunningham. “Stabilizing the ravines is essential to making the area more accessible for future generations. The project will enhance wildlife habitat and create new opportunities for recreation and education.”

Grand Marais, MN — Grand Marais Harbor Shoreline Protection and Habitat Enhancement Project: The project will design solutions to stabilize and improve the shoreline along city properties on the east side of the Main Harbor, which links to Artist’s Point, a major local attraction for residents and visitors. It will explore nature-based shoreline protections, improved stormwater management, and new public amenities. “Grand Marais’ harbor and our iconic Artist’s Point are vital cultural and economic assets for our community,” said Mayor Tracy Benson. “This project will provide sustainable solutions to restore and protect this area and ensure it continues to benefit residents and visitors.”

Toledo, OH — Ottawa River Shoreline Restoration and Trail Project: This project will design strategies to stabilize the Ottawa River shoreline, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, improve



water quality, and increase public recreation opportunities. The project site borders the Hoffman Landfill and will integrate trail upgrades and connections to the Buckeye Basin Bike Trail. “Over the last several years, the City of Toledo has continually invested in improving the quality of our waterways for better wildlife and vegetation habitats as well as opportunities for residents to enjoy time outside in more areas throughout Toledo,” Mayor Wade Kapszukiewicz said. “I am excited to partner with the Cities Initiative for the technical support that will allow us to bring new recreation opportunities and improved water quality to the Ottawa River.”

About the Resilient Coastal Projects Initiative

Launched in 2021, the RCPI responds to growing challenges from coastal hazards such as flooding and erosion, which threaten public safety, municipal infrastructure, and natural ecosystems across the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence region. Since its inception, the program has secured nearly \$18 million—primarily through federal funding—to help cities plan sustainable, fundable coastal projects.

To date, the Cities Initiative has supported nearly 80 municipalities under RCPI. Funding for this work is provided by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, with support from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

“These design projects represent a critical step forward in helping our member cities adapt to the realities of a changing climate,” said Jonathan Altenberg, CEO of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative. “We’re proud to support our local leaders as they take proactive steps to build stronger, more resilient communities.”

To learn more about the Resilient Coastal Projects Initiative, visit:

glsicities.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 municipal and Indigenous government executives representing communities in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region who are working to promote economic prosperity in our communities and protect our fresh water for the benefit of current and future generations. With more than 350 member communities, the Cities Initiative is leading the way in advancing the environmental, economic, and social health of the region by addressing issues impacting its residents.

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