



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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cities Initiative Awarded \$1.28 Million to Advance Three Critical Coastal Protection Projects

CHICAGO, IL — January 26, 2026 — The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative announced today that it has been awarded \$1.28 million from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's National Coastal Resilience Fund (NCRF) to advance engineering and design for three shoreline restoration and public resilience projects in member communities throughout the Great Lakes region.

The funding will bring three coastal projects in Michigan and Minnesota to shovel-ready status, positioning each community to begin construction. Together, these projects will restore more than 16 acres of habitat across over one mile of shoreline, protect vulnerable infrastructure, and enhance public access to some of the region's most valued waterfronts.

The initiative will engage more than 35 local and regional leaders, including mayors, engineers, state and federal agencies, and will mobilize local volunteers in native planting and stewardship efforts during implementation. Once built, the projects will help protect drinking water infrastructure, parks, public recreation spaces, cultural landmarks, and vital fish and wildlife habitat threatened by erosion, storm damage, pollution, and hardened shorelines.

"Coastal resilience requires sustained, strategic investment, and this funding helps communities take the critical next step toward construction," said Mayor Ryan Sorenson of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, Co-Chair of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative. "These projects show what's possible when federal partners, local leaders, and technical experts work together to deliver practical solutions that protect people, ecosystems, and the infrastructure our communities rely on every day."

Cheboygan Downtown Riverwalk and Greenway (Cheboygan, MI)

This project will replace failing timber dock walls with a vegetated, habitat-rich shoreline that reduces erosion and flooding while protecting public safety and vulnerable utility infrastructure along Cheboygan's downtown riverfront. The grant will allow the City of Cheboygan to advance a critical waterfront revitalization and resilience project at one of the community's most important public access points, strengthening ecological health and supporting the city's economic and cultural core.

"Securing this support is a major step forward for Cheboygan," said Mayor Brett A. Mallory of Cheboygan, Michigan. "This investment will strengthen critical infrastructure by restoring natural shoreline habitats while preserving the heart of our downtown for future generations. We're grateful to our partners and proud to be part of a regional effort to build stronger, more resilient communities."

Agate Bay Shoreline Revitalization Project (Two Harbors, MN)

This project will convert a hazardous, eroding shoreline into a resilient living shoreline that reduces wave energy, improves water quality, and stabilizes Agate Bay's northern shoreline. By



restoring native habitat and managing stormwater runoff, the project enhances coastal security while protecting a culturally significant and highly used public waterfront.

“Agate Bay has been at the center of our community for more than a century, as a working waterfront, a tourism anchor, and a place where people come together,” said Mayor Lew Conner of Two Harbors. “But years of patchwork fixes and worn-down shoreline protection have left the area unstable and unsafe, with erosion and crumbling concrete threatening the lake and the vitality of this important space. This project gives Two Harbors a stronger, more practical solution by rebuilding the shoreline in a safer, more natural way that can stand up to changing conditions. Protecting Agate Bay isn’t just about fixing a shoreline, it’s about preserving the heart of our community and ensuring it remains a vibrant, welcoming place for generations to come.”

The Cities Initiative’s coastal programs are made possible through the generous support of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and a collaboration with NOAA through the Initiative for Resilient Great Lakes Coasts. Each project was developed in partnership with its local government and community with support from technical partners at LimnoTech and Dewberry.

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 400 communities represented, 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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