



2026 U.S. Federal Priorities for Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region Communities

March 2026

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative calls on the U.S. federal government to support the following priorities to safeguard the economic prosperity and environmental health of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region communities:

Protect Our Precious Freshwater Resources

- Provide \$500 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) in Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 to aid in the ongoing restoration of our precious freshwater resources and ensure all Americans have access to fishing, hunting and other activities that sustain our communities
- Pass and sign into law the GLRI Act of 2025 to extend the program's authorization for an additional five fiscal years – at a level of \$500 million annually – and maintain the three-to-one return on investment in local economic output that the GLRI generates
- Appropriate \$25 million for the GLRI Distinct Tribal Program to support U.S. Tribes in contributing to the responsible, intergovernmental stewardship of freshwater ecosystems, consistent with the GLRI Action Plan, longstanding Tribal practices and Tribal treaty rights
- Adjust the federal cost share for the Brandon Road Interbasin Project to 100 percent for operation, maintenance, repair, rehabilitation and replacement costs and fully fund the cross-agency Invasive Species Program, helping local governments and Tribes combat invasive species, including invasive carp, mussels and purple loosestrife
- Withdraw the December 2025 rule proposed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) revising the definition of "Waters of the United States" under the Clean Water Act and restore federal protections for millions of acres of critical wetlands and streams

Expand Maritime Commerce on the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway

- Invest in additional container terminals and multimodal transportation infrastructure while expanding strategic customs clearance capacity at Great Lakes ports to increase traffic on the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway by 30 percent within 10 years, creating American jobs and improving access to international markets for American-made goods
- Oppose any port fees on Canadian-owned vessels operating in the Great Lakes – including the proposed modifications to Section 301 Annex II of the Trade Act of 1974 that would limit the ability of Canadian-owned, Chinese-built vessels to support maritime trade on the Seaway – while working with the Canadian government on a long-term strategy to reshore shipbuilding to North America and replace aging ships
- Appropriate \$250 million in FY27 for a new Great Lakes icebreaker at least as capable as the USCGC Mackinaw and fully fund the New Lock at the Soo and the Soo Locks Asset Renewal to facilitate an expansion in maritime commerce on the Seaway and reduce the risk of supply-chain failures

Build the Fresh Coast Economic Corridor

- Partner with local governments and Tribes to attract half a million new businesses to the Great Lakes over the next decade with an emphasis on strategic, innovative and water-intensive industries, continuing the region's proud legacy of manufacturing while safeguarding the health of our lakes and rivers

- Increase funding for the EPA-administered Brownfields Program in FY27 to help local governments in identifying, assessing and cleaning up contaminated properties, aiding industry attraction and retention
- Name a presidentially-appointed co-chair to the Great Lakes Authority (GLA) and appropriate \$5 million for the GLA in FY27 to foster the creation of an economic and infrastructure development plan for region-wide economic transformation

Support a Strong U.S.-Canada Trade Relationship

- Preserve the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) and use the 2026 Joint Review to reaffirm and further operationalize provisions on supply-chain resiliency (Chapters 2 and 14) and the North American Competitiveness Committee (Chapter 26), reinforcing a strong U.S.-Canada trade relationship and our \$9.3-trillion Great Lakes regional economy
- Avoid any new tariffs or tariff increases on Canadian goods in 2026 to prevent any further disruptions to the U.S.-Canada trade relationship, recognizing the potential for such actions to jeopardize the Joint Review of the USMCA and harm our integrated regional economy
- Support the cross-border resiliency of key manufacturing and resource industries across North America – including steel, aluminum, auto manufacturing and critical minerals – to promote our region's economic security

Deliver Safe and Affordable Water

- Reauthorize the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds at an annual funding level of \$3.25 billion for each program – and appropriate the full authorized amounts in FY27 – to close the water-infrastructure investment gap and support local capacity to deliver clean, safe and affordable water to all Americans
- Support the Lead and Copper Rule Improvements – including the ten-year lead service line replacement timeline for most communities – while securing a minimum \$56 billion in additional federal funding for lead service line replacement to ensure strong compliance with this important regulation for Americans' health and economic wellbeing

Bolster Coastal Resilience and Prevent Local Flooding

- Provide full funding to USACE in FY27 to sustain progress on the Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study and ensure federal and state project partners conduct robust, proactive engagement with municipal leaders to directly address the needs of coastal communities
- Maintain full funding for the Coastal Zone Management Program and the National Coastal Resilience Fund in FY27 to help communities prepare for extreme weather events, reduce cleanup costs and effectively balance economic development and coastal protection
- Resume grant allocation and disbursement for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Program to protect communities from natural disasters before they occur

About the Cities Initiative

The 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 and protect our fresh water for the benefit of current and future generations. For more information, please contact Travis Wheeler at twheeler@glslcities.org.