GREAT LAKES AND ST. LAWRENCE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nine Great Lakes communities reach major design milestones for coastal resilience projects

CHICAGO – Oct. 2, 2026 – Coastal resilience projects in nine Great Lakes communities are moving closer to implementation following the completion of significant engineering and design work through the Initiative for Resilient Great Lakes Coasts (IRGLC).

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative worked in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), consultants LimnoTech and Dewberry, and local community leaders to advance these projects to the 30%, 60% or 90% engineering and design stage. This round of IRGLC represents over $1.5 million in engineering, design and technical assistance for participating communities, supported with funds from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). Together, the projects are designed to restore habitat, address coastal hazards, and provide co-benefits to local communities through proposed solutions that include native plantings, natural shoreline stabilization, dune establishment, green stormwater infrastructure and increased public access.

The nine communities that participated in this round of IRGLC are Alpena, Mich.; Ashland, Wis.; Bay City, Mich.; Duluth, Minn.; Ecorse, Mich.; Green Bay, Wis.; Oscoda Township, Mich.; Rogers City, Mich.; and Superior, Wis.

“One of the biggest challenges communities face is moving a strong project idea far enough through the planning and design process to be ready for the next stage,” said Jon Altenberg, president and CEO of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative. “Through our partnership with NOAA, we are helping communities bridge that gap and develop coastal resilience projects that are better positioned to move toward funding and implementation.”

Several communities are already working to move their projects into the next phase. Friends of the Detroit River is working with the City of Ecorse to advance the Ecorse Creek Floodplain Restoration project through regional funding opportunities. The City of Green Bay is in an excellent position to pursue state and federal funding opportunities for construction of the East River Van Beaver Park project supported through IRGLC, and has secured implementation funding for adjacent restoration areas."

“Through our relationship with the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, the City of Green Bay had the opportunity to participate in the Initiative for Resilient Great Lakes Coasts, providing an incredible resource for advancing our project at no cost to the City,” said Melissa M. Schmitz, resiliency coordinator for the City of Green Bay. “We are grateful for the opportunity to move forward with a nature-based flood resilience solution at East River Van Beaver Park that will restore habitat, increase flood storage, improve water quality and provide additional recreational and community benefits. This type of partnership demonstrates how regional collaboration and technical assistance can help communities turn ambitious resilience concepts into actionable projects.”



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"We are grateful for the opportunity to work in partnership with the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, NOAA, and other partners on the Alpena Water Treatment Plant Protection and Starlite Beach improvement project," said Rachel Smolinski, Alpena city manager. "This project will not only assist us in our goal to improve stormwater management but will help stabilize our shoreline and ensure that it is more resilient with the fluctuating water levels and weather conditions. This work also helps support our Lake Huron Forever pledge and commitment to protect the lake now and for future generations."

"Through our partnership with the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative and the Initiative for Resilient Great Lakes Coasts, the City of Ashland has been able to take an important step forward in developing a nature-based approach to coastal resilience," said Cat Cornelius, director of parks and recreation for the City of Ashland. "Reaching 60% design has helped us better understand what implementation could look like on the western portion of Maslowski Beach and has given us a strong foundation to continue pursuing funding and partnerships. We are grateful for the technical expertise and collaboration that has helped move this project from a concept toward something that can ultimately provide long-term benefits for our shoreline, community, and visitors. It is an exciting step for Ashland."

With this round of IRGLC support complete, participating communities can continue pursuing opportunities to move their projects toward construction and implementation. The Cities Initiative has also engaged a new group of communities for the next round of IRGLC and plans to announce those communities separately.

About the Initiative for Resilient Great Lakes Coasts
The Initiative for Resilient Great Lakes Coasts is a collaborative program between the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that supports community-led efforts to restore fish and wildlife habitat in vulnerable coastal areas. The initiative provides training and technical assistance to communities, supporting the development and design of habitat-focused projects that improve local resilience. NOAA receives Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) funding for the IRGLC partnership in support of GLRI Focus Area 4: Habitat and Species objectives. Learn more: Initiative for Resilient Great Lakes Coasts - Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities 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 425 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. The Cities Initiative is comprised of a U.S. organization and a Canadian organization. In September 2025, the Cities Initiative launched its ***Economic Transformation Action Plan: A Blueprint for Economic Growth and Freshwater Stewardship in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region.***

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