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Seven Great Lakes communities launch new coastal resilience projects

CHICAGO – Nov. 18, 2026 – Seven Great Lakes communities are launching coastal resilience projects through a new round of the Initiative for Resilient Great Lakes Coasts (IRGLC), a collaborative program between the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (Cities Initiative) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). IRGLC is providing these communities technical assistance in the form of engineering and design services representing an estimated $750,000 thanks to an innovative collaboration that benefits from Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) support.

The Cities Initiative is working in partnership with NOAA, consultants LimnoTech and Dewberry and local community leaders to advance these projects to the 30% or 60% engineering and design stage. NOAA supports the partnership with GLRI Fiscal Year 2025 funds and technical support. The projects will focus on developing nature-based solutions to address coastal hazards, restore habitat and improve local resilience.

The seven communities participating in this round of IRGLC are Dunkirk, N.Y.; Euclid, Ohio; Kenosha, Wis.; Lorain County, Ohio; Marysville, Mich.; Ray Township, Mich.; and Sault Ste. Marie, Mich. With the program's expansion last year across the Great Lakes Basin, IRGLC has now successfully launched projects across all five Great Lakes watersheds.

"Communities across the Great Lakes are working to protect their shorelines and strengthen their resilience," said Jon Altenberg, president and CEO of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative. "By implementing this program across the basin, we're helping more communities access the technical expertise needed to address local challenges, restore coastal habitats and develop solutions that will benefit residents for years to come."

Projects officially kicked off in late summer and early fall 2026, with initial site visits and alternatives analysis workshops providing opportunities for communities to evaluate proposed solutions to site-specific challenges, including flooding, erosion, stormwater runoff, invasive species and water quality concerns.

Several projects highlight the range of coastal challenges communities are working to address. In Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., the Sherman Park Shoreline Resilience and Habitat Enhancement Project is exploring nature-based solutions to address shoreline erosion, including areas near an informal kayak launch and an exposed stormwater outfall. Proposed improvements include green stormwater infrastructure, native vegetation and shoreline plantings to improve water quality, restore habitat and enhance safe public access and recreational opportunities.

"We want Sherman Park to remain a place where residents and visitors can safely enjoy the waterfront for years to come," said David Boyle, City Engineer of the City of Sault Ste. Marie. "This project gives us an opportunity to address shoreline erosion and stormwater challenges while exploring improvements that could benefit the environment and the people who use the park. We are grateful for the partnership and technical assistance helping us plan for the future."

In Dunkirk, N.Y., the Point Gratiot Park Resiliency Project is examining solutions to address shoreline erosion that threatens a nearby road. Proposed approaches include removing debris, replanting trees and establishing and protecting dunes to strengthen coastal resilience.

"Protecting the public's use and enjoyment of Lake Erie in the City of Dunkirk requires breaking apart different segments of the shoreline," said Cassandra Pinkoski, Grant Specialist of the Chautauqua County Soil and Water Conservation District. "With assessments ongoing for Wright Park Beach, this funding will allow the city to now focus on Point Gratiot Park by looking ahead and taking steps to preserve its shoreline and natural features into the future. Through this project, we're working with the City to evaluate ways to address erosion, protect nearby infrastructure and maintain the park's natural character. The technical expertise provided through this partnership will help us make informed decisions about the best path forward."

In Lorain County, Ohio, the Brentwood Lake Stream and Wetland Enhancement Project is exploring ways to restore a former lakebed within the Black River Watershed that was drained following the removal of an earthen dam. Proposed solutions include invasive species management, native plantings and green stormwater infrastructure to improve habitat, manage runoff and create a community amenity.

"The Brentwood Lake project offers an exciting opportunity to reimagine a site that has the potential to become a real asset for the surrounding neighborhood," said Don Romancak, Storm Water and Community Development Coordinator of Lorain County Community Development. "By exploring ways to restore natural habitat and better manage stormwater, we're working toward a space that could provide lasting benefits for residents and the environment. We're pleased to have the technical support needed to help move this vision forward."

"I'd love to see the old lakebed become a place where neighbors can walk the trails and enjoy nature close to home, with birdhouses that could attract native birds and provide more opportunities for bird watching," said Karen Johnson, a Brentwood Lake Village resident.

Engineering and design work for the seven projects is expected to continue through summer 2027. This work will help communities further develop their proposed projects and better position them to pursue future implementation opportunities.

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, including the development and design of habitat-focused projects that improve local resilience. NOAA supports the IRGLC partnership with GLRI funds and technical support. 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 U.S. coalition of municipal and Tribal government executives representing communities in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region that is 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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