



# Building a Resilient Great Lakes Basin

Erika Jensen, Interim Executive Director  
Eric Brown, Senior Advisor for External Relations

1

## What is the Great Lakes Commission?

- A public agency established by the Great Lakes Basin Compact in 1955
- In 1968, Congress passed an act authorizing its consent to the Compact and the interstate compact agency.
- Ontario and Québec officially joined as associate members in 1999
- Allows its Member states and provinces speak with a unified voice and to reach consensus on and advocate for the region's priorities



2

2

# Who is the Great Lakes Commission?



- **Commissioners:**  
3-5 from each of the 10 states and provinces
- **Board of Directors:**  
1 from each state / province delegation
- **Chair: Sharon Jackson**, Deputy General Counsel, Office of the Governor of Indiana
- **Professional Staff**

3



3

# A Strategic Plan for the Great Lakes Commission

## Vision

The Great Lakes Commission is a binational leader and a trusted voice ensuring the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River support a healthy environment, vibrant economy and high quality of life for current and future generations.

## Mission

The Great Lakes Commission represents, advises and assists its member states and provinces by fostering dialogue, developing consensus, facilitating collaboration and speaking with a unified voice to advance collective interests and responsibilities to promote economic prosperity and environmental protection and to achieve the balanced and sustainable use of Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin water resources.

4



4

# A Strategic Plan for the Great Lakes Commission

## Core Competencies



Communications and Outreach



Information Management and Delivery



Facilitation and Consensus Building



Policy Coordination and Advocacy



Regional Project management

## Program Areas

- Water Quality
- Water Management and Infrastructure
- Commercial Navigation
- Economic Development and Waterfront Community Revitalization
- Coastal Conservation and Habitat Restoration
- Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention and Control
- Information Management and Blue Accounting

5



5

## Great Lakes 2020: A Vision for a Healthy and Resilient Great Lakes Basin

- **Fund and reauthorize the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative** to help communities clean up degraded areas and create new economic opportunities along their waterfronts.
- **Safeguard drinking water and modernize clean water infrastructure** to protect public health, support business and industry, and help revitalize communities.
- **Strengthen the Great Lakes navigation system** to support the national economy, create jobs, and reduce traffic congestion.
- **Protect against invasive species** like invasive carp, zebra mussels and sea lamprey.
- **Promote agricultural conservation** to protect water quality, reduce nutrient pollution, and prevent harmful algal blooms.
- **Build resilience** to protect the people, places, economy, and environment of the Great Lakes Basin.
- **Invest in a collaborative, data-driven approach** such as Blue Accounting to set Basinwide goals and track progress.



6



6

# Working Together to Build Basinwide Resilience



## GLC 2020 Annual Meeting

- Bringing diverse stakeholders together

## Meeting Themes:

- Regional Partnership
- Climate Resilience
- Enhance & Protect Great Lakes Basin Resources

7



7

## Climate Resilience

- Special Committee on Climate Resilience
  - November 2019 through January 2020
  - Framework for Action
- Standing Committee on Climate Resilience
  - January 2020 to present

8



8

## Framework For Action

- **Recommendation 1:** Establish a Standing Committee on Climate Resilience, comprised of Commissioners from each jurisdiction and authorized to convene additional representatives from the jurisdictions as needed. Timeframe: immediate and continuing
- **Recommendation 2:** Task the Standing Committee to develop and recommend a common definition of “Resilience” for the Great Lakes Basin. Timeframe: For consideration by the public at the Commission’s semi-annual meeting in Kenosha, WI and by the end of Q2.
- **Recommendation 3:** Develop a compilation and clearinghouse of progress that highlights state, provincial and regional efforts related to climate resilience in the Great Lakes Basin (Timeframe: Q2 2020) and establish partnerships with government agencies, research institutions and NGO’s to produce a report that compiles and assesses the environmental, economic, and social impacts of climate change to the Great Lakes Basin. Timeframe: immediate and continuing.

9



9

## Framework For Action

- **Recommendation 4:** Develop a Great Lakes Climate Resilience “State of the Basin” - a long-term outlook and an action plan that prioritizes efforts that form a roadmap to advance climate resilience in the Great Lakes Basin. Timeframe: to be explored by Standing Committee in 2020.
- **Recommendation 5:** Establish processes for sharing data, evaluating risks and challenges, and deploying strategies to advance climate resilience in the Great Lakes in collaboration with local, regional, and federal partners.
- **Recommendation 6:** Establish regular dialogue focused on climate resilience among Commissioners, Observers, and other stakeholders during Commission annual and semi-annual meetings. Timeframe: structure to be developed and recommended by Standing Committee in 2020.
- **Recommendation 7:** As needed or recommended by the Standing Committee, develop and adopt a clear, consistent and consensus-based policy statement on climate resilience for the Great Lakes Basin. Timeframe: Commission action not later than Q3 2020.

10



10

## Defining a Resilient Great Lakes Basin

Draft Committee Definition:


*A resilient Great Lakes Basin is one in which communities, infrastructure, ecosystems, and the economy can withstand, adapt to, and recover from climate-related stressors and changing conditions to ensure equitable and inclusive social, economic, and environmental well-being across the Basin.*

11



11

## Pursuing Resilience - Together

- Understand, highlight, and coordinate existing efforts
  - Federal, state, provincial, indigenous, and municipal governments
  - NGOs, academia, business, and industry
- Eliminate silos  Connect efforts
- Utilize existing forum to share expertise, identify opportunities, and address common challenges

12



12

## Building a Resilient Great Lakes Basin

- GLC Action Plan: 2020
  - Establish shared goals, set timeframes
  - Identify roles
- Implementation: 2021 and beyond
  - Pursue activities and objectives
  - Track progress
  - Establish resilience as a core value throughout the Great Lakes Basin

13



13

## Thank You!

Contact Information:

Erika Jensen: [ejensen@glc.org](mailto:ejensen@glc.org)

Eric Brown: [ebrown@glc.org](mailto:ebrown@glc.org)

14



14