

Building Coastal Resilience in Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities

Update for the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus

March 2022



GREAT LAKES AND ST. LAWRENCE
CITIES INITIATIVE

L'ALLIANCE DES VILLES
DES GRANDS LACS ET DU SAINT-LAURENT

About the Cities Initiative

- Binational coalition of over 125 U.S. and Canadian mayors working to advance the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River
- Current focus on COVID relief, water equity, water infrastructure funding, and coastal resilience



Understanding Coastal Resilience Challenges



Caledonia, WI | Source: [The Journal Times](#)



Mackinac Island, MI | Source: [Crain's Detroit Business](#)

- **Variability** – Water levels in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin are naturally variable with cyclical highs and lows.
- **Severity** – Climate change is exacerbating these fluctuations with recent years reaching record high water levels.
- **Damage** – High water levels, paired with severe storm events and wave action, are leading to greater erosion and flooding events.
- **Threat** – Erosion and flooding threaten public and private properties, critical infrastructure, shoreline habitat, and recreation / tourism potential.

Coastal Resilience Program Priorities

RESEARCH

- Coastal Resilience Needs Assessment Survey
- Resource evaluation
- Forecasting future coastal conditions / impacts

STRATEGY

- Mayors Advisory Council on Coastal Resilience

ADVOCACY / POLICY

- U.S. and Canadian priorities for funding and technical support available to local municipalities

EDUCATION / ENGAGEMENT

- Lake Michigan Coastal Resilience Initiative
- Climate Literacy
- Presentations

IMPLEMENTATION

- Regional work groups focused on project development
- Resources and support for planning and decision-making

Research: Needs Assessment Survey

- **61%** of communities are **highly concerned about coastal issues** and **67%** have seen an **increasing level of interest** in addressing coastal issues
- **Current concerns** are primarily focused on responding to:
 - Shoreline / bluff erosion
 - Flooding / high water levels
 - Infrastructure damage
 - Storm frequency / severity
- **Funding for mitigation projects and planning** is a high priority for communities; however, existing funding **opportunities do not meet this need** for most communities to respond to coastal issues
- Communities noted **support from state, provincial and federal agencies** as very important to their efforts to respond to coastal issues; however, current support is **not meeting the needs** of coastal communities

Research: Needs Assessment Survey

Anticipated future expenditures over the
next 5 years for coastal impacts

(Underrepresentation of actual need)

U.S. Responses: **\$1.95 billion USD**

Canadian Responses: **\$0.26 billion USD**

Total: \$2.21 billion USD

Strategy:

Mayors Advisory Council on Coastal Resilience

- Formed in February 2021 to convene mayors, field practitioners, and researchers **to explore and prioritize most pressing coastal needs**
- Leveraged exploration to develop **binational, U.S. and Canadian recommendations** covering the following topics:
 - Improving access to relevant **resources and funding**
 - Identifying and filling **data and information gaps**
 - Boosting **coordination and collaboration** across all levels of government and between public and private entities
 - Elevating coastal resilience as a **priority** across the basin
- Recommendations will serve as the roadmap for **developing and implementing action plans** in 2022

Implementation:

Regional Coastal Resilience Work Groups

- Program focuses on identifying municipal coastal resilience projects and developing implementation roadmaps to get projects funded
- Pilot programs started in Wisconsin (Lake Michigan) with support from the Fund for Lake Michigan and SE Michigan with support from the Erb Family Foundation
- Wisconsin pilot has identified 60+ potential projects across 13 communities and currently are narrowing down to one project per participating community
- Expanding work in 2022 with support from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to cover Illinois, Indiana, West Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin's Lake Superior communities

Advocacy: U.S. Priorities

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

Army Corps of Engineers:

- Great Lakes Coastal Resilience Study
- Continuing Authorities Program (CAP)

FEMA:

- Safeguarding Tomorrow through Ongoing Risk Mitigation (STORM) Act
- Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC)
- Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)

NOAA:

- Coastal Zone Management Program
- National Sea Grant College Program

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation:

- National Coastal Resilience Fund

Advocacy: Canadian Priorities

Implement a Canada Water Agency

Support Climate Adaptation for Coastal Communities

- Establish a joint Office of Shoreline Climate Change Adaption and Resilience with a \$1 billion federal commitment
- Reinststate federal shoreline restoration funding for communities along the St. Lawrence Seaway
- Consult with cities in development of Canada's first National Adaptation Strategy
- Advance a green infrastructure Centre of Excellence at Infrastructure Canada

Engage Municipalities in the Development of Climate Change Adaptation Tools

Enable Municipalities to Protect Water Quality for Their Communities

- Relaunch the Clean Water and Wastewater Fund
- Commit \$1 billion to the Freshwater Action Plan

Thank You!

Matt Doss

U.S. Policy Director

Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

734-474-1985

Matthew.Doss@glslcities.org