

# 2022 Federal Great Lakes Policy Priority: Fund Great Lakes Restoration at \$400 Million

## The Alliance for the Great Lakes requests of the Biden administration and Congress:

- The Biden administration must propose at least \$400 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) in the FY2023 President's Budget request to Congress, consistent with the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Authorization Act.
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) should use some of the additional GLRI Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funding provided in 2021 (approximately \$200 million per year for five years) to accelerate work on delisting Areas of Concern (AOCs) by cleaning up these toxic hotspots.
- The U.S. EPA should reconvene the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration among federal, state, local, and tribal governments and communities to update the 2005 "Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes."<sup>1</sup> This requires meaningful contributions from communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities to set new goals for policies, programs, and funding with a focus on specific actions that can be taken across the Great Lakes Interagency Task Force to combat environmental injustice in the Great Lakes region and to address climate change. These items need to be built into the DNA of the Strategy and not tacked on as afterthoughts.
- The U.S. EPA should include the GLRI in its Justice 40 initiative by measuring the benefits that disadvantaged communities receive from the program. U.S. EPA should simultaneously increase GLRI grant funding to communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities to address the disproportionate impacts of environmental harm.
- Congress should appropriate \$500,000 for FY 2022 and the Army Corps of Engineers should initiate the Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study to develop solutions to improve coastal resiliency to protect shoreline communities and address threats from climate change. The Corps should urgently secure necessary agreements with the Great Lakes states so the study commences immediately upon funding.

## BACKGROUND

Congress established and funded the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) in 2010 to allow the U.S. EPA, working in collaboration with other federal agencies, states, and tribes, to provide grant funds to take actions to restore and protect the Great Lakes. The funding addresses on-the-ground restoration projects, including habitat restoration, addressing non-point source pollution, cleaning up legacy pollution and toxic sediments, and actions to prevent the establishment or spread of invasive species. To date, the GLRI has funded more than 6,000 individual projects totaling \$2.9 billion and greatly improving the quality of life in the region.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the GLRI also provides major economic benefits, as it is estimated that for every dollar spent, an additional three dollars of value is added to the regional economy.<sup>2</sup>

Although the GLRI has been producing results for communities around the region, in 2020 the Healing Our Waters Coalition (HOW) sponsored a review of the program that found that serious threats remain in communities of color, Indigenous communities, and disadvantaged communities.<sup>3</sup>

As a result, HOW and its members, including the Alliance, developed a series of recommendations to make the program more equitable by incorporating principles and goals of environmental justice into the program's strategy and greater community representation and engagement in the program's implementation.<sup>4</sup>

### Every GLRI project dollar spent 2010-2016:

- Will produce **\$3.35** of additional economic activity through 2036
- Will generate **\$1.62** in additional economic activity in tourism-related industries through 2036
- Produced quality of life improvements worth **\$1.08** to residents in coastal communities



Image credit: Great Lakes Commission