



# Wetlands Restoration

## Regional Priorities for the Great Lakes

March 2007

### Background on the Issue

The landscape and aquatic ecosystems in the Great Lakes basin have been altered due to human settlement and activities, resulting in the loss or degradation of many wildlife habitats, including fish spawning substrate and nursery areas. Great Lakes habitat loss and degradation is a pressing concern. The Great Lakes have lost more than half of the region's original wetlands and 60 percent of forest lands, and the region only has small remnants of other habitat types such as savannah or prairies. These changes in habitat type and extent have contributed to the loss of numerous plant and animal species throughout the Great Lakes basin.

The 10,000 miles of Great Lakes coastline include more than 530,000 acres of coastal wetlands, sand and cobble beaches, and the largest system of freshwater



Photo courtesy Michigan Sea Grant.

#### *This fact sheet prepared by the* **Great Lakes Commission**

The Great Lakes Commission is an interstate compact agency that works on behalf of the eight Great Lakes states to advance restoration, protection and sound management of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin.

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dunes in the world. More than 30,000 islands scattered throughout the lakes are refuges for rare and sensitive species. These Great Lakes resources have substantial economic value. Current estimates indicate that boating, fishing, hunting and wildlife watching generate over \$50 billion of economic activity annually and generate hundreds of thousands of jobs. Healthy and diverse Great Lakes ecosystems are also of great value to the Tribal Nations who rely on these resources to meet their subsistence, economic, cultural, spiritual, and medicinal needs.

### Congressional Priorities for Wetlands Restoration

The Great Lakes Commission requests congressional support for the following priorities to restore wetlands. These priorities reflect recommendations from the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration and the Council of Great Lakes Governors.

- Appropriate \$28.5M to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to begin restoration of 200,000 acres of wetlands, toward the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration goal of restoring 550,000 acres. States, local governments and NGOs would raise an additional \$28.5M in nonfederal matching funds.
- Appropriate \$16.0M under the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act to the USFWS for grants to states, tribes and local governments to restore coastal wetlands.
- Pass legislation to authorize a Great Lakes Tributary River Restoration Act to provide cost-shared grants to locally managed restoration projects in priority watersheds and appropriate \$40.0M to the USFWS for this program.

## Funding History and Committee Jurisdiction

### House

- Committee on Natural Resources – Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans
- Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Environment and Related Agencies

### Senate

- Committee on Environment and Public Works – Subcommittee on Water Quality
- Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies

Fund for the **Great Lakes Coastal Program, Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, and the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program** are reviewed in the *Report to the President on the Implementation of the Great Lakes Executive Order*, which is available at [www.epa.gov/glnpo/collaboration/taskforce/rttp\\_implementation.html](http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/collaboration/taskforce/rttp_implementation.html). The Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act was funded in FY2006 at \$1.77 million. The Great Lakes Tributary River Restoration Act is not yet authorized.

## Benefits to the Great Lakes Region

The **Great Lakes Coastal Program** is an on-the-ground program that works to maintain natural coastal ecosystem diversity, functions and productivity; promote natural, self-sustaining populations of native species within their historic ranges; and, provide for ecologically sound levels of public use, economic benefits and enjoyment of natural resources. 2006 accomplishments are available at: [www.fws.gov/midwest/greatlakes/Accomplishment\\_Summaries\\_2006.htm](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/greatlakes/Accomplishment_Summaries_2006.htm)

The **Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program** has restored more than 168 miles of Great Lakes tributary streams; 10,000+ acres of grasslands and wetlands that provide essential resting, nesting, and feeding habitats for migratory birds; and a variety of watershed restoration projects designed to improve Great Lakes water quality.

Since its inception in 1990, the **National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program** has provided about \$165 million in grant monies to 25 coastal states and one U.S. territory to acquire, protect or restore over 200,000 acres of coastal wetland ecosystems. The projects are funded under authority of the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act.

The **Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Grants Program** provides federal grants on a competitive basis to states, tribes and other interested entities to encourage cooperative conservation, restoration and management of fish and wildlife resources and their habitat in the Great Lakes basin. The projects are funded under authority of the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act of 2006.

## Links for More Information

### Great Lakes Coastal Program

[www.fws.gov/midwest/greatlakes/glcoastal.htm](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/greatlakes/glcoastal.htm)  
[www.fws.gov/coastal/CoastalProgram](http://www.fws.gov/coastal/CoastalProgram)

### Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program

<http://ecos.fws.gov/partners>

### National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program

[www.fws.gov/coastal/CoastalGrants](http://www.fws.gov/coastal/CoastalGrants)

### Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Grants Program

[www.fws.gov/midwest/Fisheries/glfwra-grants.html](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Fisheries/glfwra-grants.html)