



**GREAT LAKES REGIONAL COLLABORATION
ANNUAL MEETING CONFERENCE CALL SUMMARY
December 10, 2008**

1. Welcome and Introductions

Gary Gulezian (U.S. EPA, Director of GLNPO) – Welcomed participants to the 2008 Annual Meeting of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration (GLRC) being held by conference call. Participants on the call introduced themselves (see attached list of known participants) The last annual meeting of the GLRC Stakeholders was a meeting in Chicago about a year ago during October and we received a number of good recommendations at that session as to how we can improve the Collaboration. One thing that came out of that meeting was the institution of quarterly conference calls with stakeholders, with 50+ people participating on each call. We've been able to share progress on the joint implementation initiatives of the GLRC, ask questions, and share other information. That's essentially what we want to do today as well.

Tom Looby (Contract facilitator w/Industrial Economics, Inc.) – Suggested that the participants may want to look at materials for the call on the GLRC the website at: <http://glrc.us>. The agenda was summarized and status reports on the Implementation Initiatives were provided as follows:

2. Background and Progress to Date on Joint Initiatives:

Ted Smith (U.S. EPA, GLNPO) - (Toxics Initiative) – The Great Lakes Mercury Emissions Reduction Strategy formed a workgroup in April 2008 with support from EPA, made progress with a table of contents, information on sources, and on November 13th sent out a GLIN announcement seeking public comments on elements of the Strategy, which are due December 20th. With respect to education/outreach, we continue to promote the tools that have been developed and tool kits have been online for several months. During Earth Week we had a successful collection campaign of pharmaceutical waste and e-waste with 100 towns participating and over 5 million pills and 5 million pounds of e-waste were collected. The Sportfish Consortium Project has designed a mercury protocol and is working to develop a fish consumption advisory toolkit.

Melissa Soline (Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative) - (Clean Beaches Initiative) – The Clean Beaches Initiative was launched about a year ago to get the standardized beach sanitary survey out to local and tribal beach managers. In Spring 2008, partners conducted targeted outreach efforts about the survey, including a very successful media event in Racine, WI. We've had indications that close to 120 beaches used the survey this past season, and we recently convened a workgroup to discuss next steps in encouraging the use of the survey and more tools.

Jim Grazio (PA DEP) - (Invasive Species Initiative) – This past July a rapid response mock exercise was conducted at Presque Isle with a table top and field component of the drill. The primary purpose was to test the GLRC Rapid Response Communication Protocol To a fisherman discovering a snakehead aquatic invasive species. There was a media component that went extremely well. The communication protocol was very helpful and we had excellent public and press coordination. The exercise provided opportunities for the state to see what areas need to be improved such as the need for a uniform operational framework and the need to identify a state invasive species coordinator.

Jan Miller (USACE) - (Wetlands Habitat Initiative) – Over the past two years the Great Lakes Habitat Initiative has developed a set of web-based tools including an inventory of about 200 site-specific

conservation/restoration projects and an inventory of about 100 funding programs for habitat projects. These are all now on the website: <http://www.glhi.org>. These tools are intended to be accessible. There is a second round of nine workshops that will be conducted in the Great Lakes states and for the Tribes to demonstrate the utility of the tools as well as state and tribal priorities for habitat restoration. The first was held in Ohio a week ago, the website has the schedule of the remaining workshops. We have developed a path forward for sustaining the tools with funding and formation of a Habitat Species Subcommittee has been proposed to the GLRC Executive Subcommittee. We've got a lot of momentum built up and a path for continuing leadership.

Lisa Wojnarowski (Council of Great Lakes Governors) - (Clean Boats Initiative) – During the Summer of 2008 there was a celebration of sustainable recreation which included boater education and outreach materials available on GLRC website. They also held 20 boater outreach education events related to preventing spread of AIS, which are also listed on the website.

Jamie Schardt U.S. EPA, GLNPO) - (New Botulism Response Initiative) – Chronic Outbreaks of botulism are occurring in the Great Lakes have killed over 10,000 birds and fish such as loons, piping plovers. The risk to humans is assumed to be low at this time but the cases are causing changes to the food web and creating challenges for disposal of dead carcasses. Responding to the issue will take a multi-agency approach to address botulism in the Great Lakes. This winter we'll be setting up a coordination network to prepare for the 2009 season. The state of science is advancing and we think we'll be in a good place to adopt new best management practices for the challenge.

Dan Keifer (Clinton River Watershed) – What is the speculation as to why we're seeing this change in the frequency/pattern of botulism?

Jamie Schardt – We are not sure yet but a leading hypothesis is that there is a relationship between increasing zebra mussels, increasing water clarity, and nutrient cycling in near shore areas which is increasing algae growth. When the algae dies off it creates an oxygen poor environment which encourages the growth of the toxins/botulism. The toxin becomes concentrated in organisms through the food web and the fish-eating birds consume infected prey fish. Lots of components of the ecosystem are contributing.

3. Comments by GLRC Executive Subcommittee Representatives:

Administration Representative

Ben Grumbles (U.S. EPA Assistant Administrator for Water) – The Collaboration is working well in many respects. Since the creation of the Federal Inter-Agency Task Force and Regional Working Group, there is an unprecedented level of communication among federal agencies. The Inter-Agency Task force will be convened December 18th by Administrator Johnson, and the working group meets weekly to discuss the Implementation Initiatives. The task force has undertaken significant on the ground actions, committed to 48 near-term actions, 37 of those have been completed and the majority of the rest are on track towards completion. Some notable examples include: in the effort to protect/restore 100,000 acres of Great Lakes wetlands \$3 million in federal funds have been provided to support 52 restoration projects since 2005. proactive on new and emerging issues for which there may not be effective existing programs. The IATF and RWG have also been very proactive on emerging issues such as the new Botulism Initiative and the Rapid Response to AIS Initiative. There is much more to be done now and in the future but we have been making significant progress among the Federal Agencies and with the GLRC Partners.

Congressional Representative

Joy Mulinex (Congressional Great Lakes Task Force, and Representative Levin's Office) – Since our last annual meeting, Congress has had one very notable success in enacting the Great Lakes Legacy Act reauthorization bill which includes \$54 million dollars annually to clean up contaminated sediments, gives EPA greater flexibility in managing funds, and expands applicable projects to include habitat restoration. Congress was unable to increase authorizations to \$150 million/year this time, so we are looking forward to try to tackle legislation to do that next year. Congress also reauthorized State Revolving Loan Fund and Beaches Act, as well as Coastal and Ocean Observation System Act. One item worth mentioning is the passage of the Great Lakes St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact, which was a great success.

Governors' Representative

Ken DeBeaussart (Council of Great Lakes Governors and MI Governors Office) – While some important progress has been made towards our shared vision on the Initiatives, we feel that the promise of the GLRC Strategy is largely unfulfilled. Important progress includes passage of the GLLA Reauthorization and Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact and we hope that model can be used moving forward. The first meeting of the compact council was held recently. We look forward to building and expanding on the initiatives. There are a series of near-term actions, including the State Revolving Loan Fund which has lost funds recently, we are asking Congress to appropriate the full amounts to recently passed legislation. The Governors prefer the passage of a national aquatic invasive species act. National ballast water protection legislation is also needed. We applaud the President-Elect's commitment to Great Lakes protection and restoration as a priority.

Dan Kieffer (Clinton River Watershed Council) – Acknowledged the work of Ken DeBeaussart and others on the passage of the Great Lakes Compact and stressed the urgency of moving forward on a number of additional elements of the Strategy. Yes, some things have been accomplished but we have a long ways yet to go.

Mayors' Representative

Dave Ullrich (Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative) – Our Canadian partners are important too. A lot of our information includes Canadian cities as well. We worked with the Great Lakes Commission last year to get a better handle on local spending to protect the Lakes. In 2006 over \$15 billion (\$11 billion U.S. and \$4B Canadian) was spent by municipalities on restoration/conservation projects. Out of \$11 billion U.S., roughly \$7- 8B is going to water quality (infrastructure, CSO problems) and \$3-4B to ecosystem protection. We hope there is integration with watershed protection efforts. Also want to mention water conservation, within our organization we have 33 cities moving towards a 15% reduction in water withdrawals by 2015. Beaches are another especially important area, the sanitary survey work has been very successful, especially in being able to identify sources of beach contamination. Some examples of activities going on include: Duluth is moving towards \$70 million to deal with CSOs and SSOs. Chicago is doing a lot with Brownfields. Grand Rapids is moving aggressively into sustainable approaches. Toledo is making a \$60 million investment in capital improvements. Erie is investing \$20M in wet weather flow controls. Highlight a cluster of interesting work in NW Wisconsin and Duluth and Superior regarding wastewater, mercury reduction and pharmaceuticals control. Financing is becoming a problem and defaults on municipal bonds going up. The economic stimulus package is very important to the Great Lakes. We've identified \$700 million in projects that are ready to go in 2009, there is a lot of demand for the work. Looking at a balanced approach that integrates economic and social aspects is where we're trying to go with our work.

Marc Hudon – We need to seek more joint efforts with the Canadians, particularly on updates to the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

Dave Ullrich – I think there is an effort in connection with the 100 year anniversary in June of the Boundary Waters Treaty, there is hope to get the President and Prime Minister meet there. It would be great to get that focus on the Great Lakes. Second, with the re-negotiation of the water quality agreement, there are opportunities to strengthen the cross-border ties between U.S. and Canadian activities With an emphasis on infrastructure investments.

Heather Stirratt (NOAA) – She mentioned the Ashland smart growth project and inquired about how many future projects there are?

Dave Ullrich – The \$700 million is predominantly wastewater infrastructure, we can talk more offline about them.

Tribal Representative

Frank Ettawageshik – Expressed thanks for work already being done on the Collaboration with a particular thanks to Ben Grumbles and Steve Johnson's efforts on behalf of EPA. This is an unprecedented level of involvement of so many groups. We now have a great tool to move forward in addition to the verbal commitments from the incoming Obama administration. The Tribes have been using the GLRC Strategy to guide our projects on a lot of issues, including habitat, clean boats, invasive species, etc. We have people working on all of these initiatives. We are taking the 7 generation view, which continues to be an important observation. The Water Walkers, a group of grandmothers, have completed their circuit around the Great Lakes to bring attention to the Lakes. We worked hard on getting the Compact approved and we're pleased that was done. Many members of the tribal citizenry have individually been working on projects, too many to mention. One in particular is collaboration with Canadian authorities on the clean up of the St. Mary's River.

4. Comments by Great Lakes Stakeholders:

Steve Holland (Ohio Coastal Management) – Updating Ohio Lake Erie Lake Restoration Plan, provides action steps through 2014 which was based on GLRC priorities, available at <http://www.lakeerie.ohio.gov>.

Greg Barrett (Saginaw Chippewa Tribe) – Concerned about proposed coal plants coming into Michigan and how would that impact the Great Lakes? Haven't heard any discussion about these impacts.

Ted Smith – Utilities are one of the sectors being looked at as part of mercury emissions reduction strategy, new coal plants would be part of our analysis.

Tom Looby – State permitting processes probably include opportunity for public comment. He suggested working with the Michigan DEQ to get more information on your question.

Cameron Davis (Alliance for Great Lakes) – Great Lakes Urban Habitat Restoration Symposium designed to help advance the GLRC habitat pieces, we welcome you to look at the info on the GLRC website.

John Andersen (Nature Conservancy) – Great Lakes have been added to our global campaign for a sustainable planet priorities, we hope to raise \$200 million in private investments. Goals are a net gain of 1 million acres, preserve 20 priority watersheds and 15 priority coastal reaches. They are also looking at 6 regions to work on adaptation to climate change. Next step is to develop strategies to accomplish these goals and other basin-wide strategies. Website is <http://www.nature.org>, and you can navigate from there to the Great Lakes.

Kathy Evans (Michigan Statewide Public Advisory Council on AOCs) – They are moving forward w/ clean up and restoration activities in 14 watersheds. Under the Lake Michigan LaMP they are networking to educate and promote green activities within local governments. I've seen a lot of increased collaboration and communication due to these projects and the plan.

Gildo Torre (Ducks Unlimited) – Focusing on on-the-ground restoration, received a \$1M North American Wetlands Conservation grant for Saginaw Bay and Lake St. Clair and are working with a variety of partners on it. We are assembling a collaboration in SW Michigan to do similar on-the-ground wetlands restoration. Getting things done acre by acre.

Carri Lohse-Hanson (Minnesota Pollution Control agency) – MN passed ballast water legislation that requires permits, best practices, ballast water treatment.

Ken DeBeaussart – Working on Michigan Great Lakes plan based on GLRC. Held 20 sessions across the state and engaged 2,000 people, hoping to see it finalized by the end of the year for the new administration.

Heather Stirratt (NOAA) – NOAA has in its GL Regional Action Plan \$10,000 seed money to provide for an aquatic invasive species conference on zebra mussels, we're looking for lessons learned to share where these species are spreading. Hoping to come up with a plan of action on how to utilize the money, perhaps in an implementation plan of some capacity. Anyone with any ideas can contact me. Phone: 952-361-6610, ext 231.

Stakeholder Comments

Gildo Torre – Attended last Great Lakes Habitat Initiatives state meeting in Ohio. He wants to encourage Collaboration to work on permitting issue for wetlands restoration.

Ben Grumbles – Don't lose sight of progress made, while focusing on how far we have to go. Needs to be a unifying, motivational effort, no role for partisanship.

5. Closing Remarks

Dave Ullrich – Thanks to Ben for his support over the years. This Friday, December 12 will be the 3rd anniversary of the signing of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy. This plan didn't go up on the shelf, it appears that this document has life in it. I think some of the early discouragement may have been related to a lack of communication and we've been working to improve that. From what I've heard, we've made some good progress. On a day like today when you hear many specifics you realize there's more going on than we know. Another theme - not a strong enough link between document, management, and on-the-ground work. It is up to us to continue and build on the momentum we have. Let's make sure there's no slowing down of activity in transition period. The economic challenges are massive, governmental budgets are challenged and it's tough out there in the private sector. I hope that we can make the case that this is good for the economy as well as the environment. There are particular challenges related to climate change and other dynamics that are out there. The next quarterly call is March 17th at 2 pm central, 3 pm eastern time. We want to have some kind of annual gathering, but no information on that yet.

6. Call Participants:

The following members of the GLRC Executive Subcommittee, selected federal agencies, GLNPO staff, contractors and others participated in the call. Additional participants responded to the RSVP and are listed in records held by GLNPO.

U.S EPA: Ben Grumbles, Gary Gulezian, Vicki Thomas, Macara Lousberg, Tony Kizlauskas, Ted Smith, James Schardt, Rita Cestaric

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: Jan Miller

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: Heather Stirratt

U.S. Department of Transportation: Doris Bautch

U.S. Department of Interior: Mike Chezik, Phyllis Ellin (National Park Service)

U.S. Forest Service: Karen Sykes

Congressional Great Lakes Task Force: Joy Mulinex

States: Dave Naftzger and Lisa Wojnarowski (Council of Great Lakes Governors), Ken DeBeaussart (MI), Lori Boughton and Jim Grazio (PA), Carri Lohse-Hanson (MN),

Cities: David Ullrich and Melissa Soline (Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative)

Tribal Representatives: Frank Ettawageshik (Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians)

Non-Governmental Organizations and Stakeholders: Gildo Torre (Ducks Unlimited), Dan Keifer (Clinton River Watershed Council), Marc Hudon, Steve Holland (Ohio Coastal Management), Greg Barrrett (Saginaw Chippewa Tribe), Cameron Davis (Alliance for Great Lakes), John Andersen (Nature Conservancy), Kathy Evans (Michigan Statewide Public Advisory Council on AOCs), John Jackson (Great Lakes United), Matt Hudson, Dale Phenicie and Evelyn Strader (Council of Great Lakes Industries), Bob Latelle, Mike Murray, Kathy Evans, Jim Keesel, Brian Smith, Kay Austin (International Joint Commission), Jan Surface (USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service), Ben Gillo, Ruth Stouffer, Jennifer Hill-Kelly, Jennifer Day, Dick Bartz , and others on the line but not introduced.

Contractor/Call Facilitator: Tom Looby (EMA Inc.)

Contractor/ Note-taker: Maggie Clary (IEc)