



## **Toxic Pollutants Initiative**

*Endorsed by GLRC Executive Committee on March 2, 2007*

### **I. Introduction**

While certain persistent toxic substances (PTS) have been significantly reduced in the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem over the past 30 years, they continue to be present at levels that pose threats to human and wildlife health, warrant fish consumption advisories in all five lakes, and disrupt a way of life for many in the basin, particularly the life ways and culture of tribal communities. The GLRC Strategy calls for the continued reduction and virtual elimination of persistent toxic substances such as mercury and PCBs in the basin, as well as preventing new toxic threats to the basin through pollution prevention and enhanced surveillance, protecting public health through education and outreach, and working with international fora to address out of basin sources. This Toxic Pollutants Initiative sets forth a series of near term activities undertaken by members of the Collaboration to implement these recommendations.

### **II. Proposed Activities**

#### **Mercury Phase-down Strategy**

A basin-wide mercury product stewardship strategy is under development to fulfill the Collaboration Strategy recommendation to phase-down mercury in products and waste. A workgroup comprising State, Tribal, and City staff was formed in April 2006 to develop a basin-wide Strategy for the phase-down of mercury in products and waste. A draft of the Mercury Phase-down Strategy will be completed by the end of March 2007 for review by Governors, Tribal Leaders and local government leaders. Pending their review, a public comment period is anticipated in summer 2007. The goal is to have a finalized GLRC endorsed Phase-down Strategy by fall 2007. Outcomes of this effort will include legislative and other policy responses in the basin that respond to the recommendations of the Mercury Phase-down Strategy, and longer term mercury removed from the Great Lakes basin in products and waste as a result of implementation actions

#### **Burn Barrel Education and Outreach Campaign**

USEPA with Great Lakes States, Tribes, and Cities are collaboratively developing an education and outreach program to address open burning across the Great Lakes Basin. This project targets Local and Tribal waste management officials to provide:

1. Education about environmental concerns associated with trash burning,
2. Information on infrastructure and alternatives to burning in communities and
3. Tools to strengthen state, tribal and local ordinances on burning and support greater compliance with current regulations.

Staff will present at State-wide meetings in all Great Lakes States through the end of calendar year 2007. Outcomes will include numbers of ordinances banning burning in the Basin, trash disposal alternatives implemented in the Basin, and reductions in the practice of burning garbage across the Basin

## **Pharmaceutical and Electronic Waste Disposal Education and Outreach Campaign**

USEPA, in collaboration with Great Lakes States, Tribes, and Cities are developing an education and outreach program to address pharmaceutical and electronic wastes in the Great Lakes Basin. Similar to the burn barrel campaign above, this campaign will target State, Tribal and Local waste management officials to provide information about pharmaceutical and electronic waste disposal and recycling policies and options. Toolkits have been developed that provide information on health and environmental concerns associated with these wastes; current federal, state and local regulations governing recycling and disposal; examples of take-back programs and other success stories; and, a list of resources. IL/IN Sea Grant staff are attending a series of State-wide meetings of Local and Tribal government officials across the Basin to present and provide the toolkits, through calendar year 2007. Outcomes will include collection and/or recycling activities implemented as a result of the campaign, pounds of pharmaceuticals collected and safely disposed, and pounds of E-waste recycled and/or safely disposed

## **Great Lakes Sport Fish Consortium Project**

The Great Lakes Sport Fish Consortium (via the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services with representatives of all Great Lakes States and also Tribes) has been funded by USEPA to finalize a basin-wide uniform mercury protocol for sensitive populations. This project will develop new fish consumption outreach materials related to mercury. To create an economy of scale, one grantee will develop the materials based on a goal of state consensus. In turn, the states will be able to use materials for outreach. A final Draft Protocol will be produced by the end of calendar year 2007. Basin-wide Outreach Materials will be produced by the end of calendar year 2008. Outcomes will include advisories issued based on the Protocol. This project will take into consideration the needs of subsistence and commercial fishermen.