



Great Lakes Regional Collaboration

GREAT LAKES REGIONAL COLLABORATION MAY 13, 2008 PUBLIC CALL SUMMARY

1. **Call Participants:** The following members of the GLRC Executive Subcommittee, selected federal agencies, GLNPO staff, contractors and others participated in the call.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: Gary Gulezian, Vicki Thomas, Macara Lousberg, Tony Kizlauskas, James Schardt, Rita Cestarcic, Ted Smith

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: Jan Miller

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Bob Krska

Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission: Reggie Cadotte

Great Lakes Congressional Delegation: Joy Mulinex

Governors: David Naftzger (Council of Great Lakes Governors), Chuck Ledine and Kim Walls (Wisconsin)

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

Stakeholders and Other Organizations: Matt Doss (Great Lakes Commission), Chris Grubbs (National Wildlife Foundation), Sanjiv Sinha (ECT), Lissa Radke (Lake Superior Binational Forum), Kerry Leigh (Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning), and others on the line but who did not introduce themselves.

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

Note-taker (Contractor): Maggie Clary (IEc)

An estimated 60 persons participated based upon the number of phone lines that were in use for the call.

2. **Background and Introductions:** Macara Lousberg (USEPA – Office of Water) welcomed participants to the call on behalf of the Subcommittee of Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Executive Committee. She explained that today's call is a continuation of the outreach efforts commenced in the fall of 2007 and with calls in November 2007 and February 2008. She summarized the topics for today's discussion as:

- An update on the five key GLRC Initiatives underway in the Region
- Ideas for future initiatives
- Follow-up on ideas from previous calls
- Open discussion/ comments

3. **GLRC Implementation Initiatives:** Facilitator Tom Looby introduced discussion on the five Great Lakes Implementation Initiatives currently underway. USEPA and other Subcommittee representatives summarized the status of each as follows:

- **Great Lakes Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Initiative:** James Schardt (USEPA - GLNPO) provided a report on the AIS Initiative. Some key highlights included: The aquatic invasive species rapid response initiative is meant to increase the likelihood that we can deal with new invasions while populations are small. We created a federal Rapid Response Team to cooperate with state, local and other programs already in place. This quickly expanded to include management agencies. A Rapid Response Communication Protocol for interagency communication was established in 2007. It respects existing agency responsibilities but gives them more expert resources, ranging from early detection and rapid assessment to implementation. Now that protocol is in place in 2008 we'll be testing it with a mock exercise in the Presque Isle, Pennsylvania area in late July or early August. The state of Pennsylvania has already begun contacting state and local agencies, and we'll also be including management agencies. We hope to have tabletop exercises as well as boats on the water. We are looking to expand the opportunity for participants and observers and also want to hold a media event to help get the word out. All of that will be coming soon.

- **Habitat and Wetlands Initiative:** Jan Miller (USACE) provided an update on the Great Lakes Habitat Initiative and the Wetlands Initiative, which have now been consolidated. An initial GLRC Strategy goal is to protect and restore 200,000 acres of wetlands in the Great Lakes Basin. The Habitat Initiative (HI) started in 2006 with \$1.2 million to advance recommendations from habitat species chapter of GLRC. It is designed to facilitate linking of projects with funding opportunities. We are in the final stages and have developed a database of potential habitat projects that can be viewed at <http://www.glhi.org>. We have an inventory of 140 funding programs (not yet up on website, will be in next month or two) and are in the process of enhancing databases to make both available online through a single website. A final report is being reviewed by the HI Steering Committee. Concurrent with that, a “Call to Action” report was developed last fall in partnership with the Wetlands Subcommittee of the federal Great Lakes Interagency Task Force. It includes information on how many wetlands acres have been restored, etc. There will be a series of workshops held this summer (July/August); one in each state. The purpose is to present the “Call to Action” report, the finished projects from the habitat initiatives, and to serve as a forum for different interests to provide input for habitat projects and how to use these tools in the future. There is a HI Steering Committee meeting this Thursday in Chicago to discuss the next iteration which could be a GLRC-led activity to take the baton as the initial Habitat Initiative project nears its end.

Discussion:

Kerry Leigh (Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning) – Interested in the Chicago meeting

Jan – I’ll get the information to Tony Kizlauskas to post; it is a steering committee meeting but is open to those interested.

Sanjiv Sinha (ECT) – Are there any specific things beyond the projects list that you think will be useful to add to the work you have done as you pass this on to the GLRC?

Jan – We’re certainly looking for the Subcommittee under the GLRC to take ownership, the Corps has been able to get \$100,000 into the President’s Budget for basic maintenance. From that baseline there are lots of other potential improvements and I think we can look to the state workshops for input on how to improve or better utilize these tools.

- **Toxic Substances Initiative:** Ted Smith (USEPA – GLNPO) summarized some of the key activities associated with the Toxic Substances Initiative. They include the following projects which are summarized below: 1) mercury phase-down strategy, 2) education/outreach, 3) sport fish protocol for mercury, and 4) a new mercury emissions reduction strategy.

1) The Mercury Phase-Down Strategy started 2 years ago, included states, local, tribal groups. The initiative addresses reducing/phasing out mercury in products such as dental amalgam, thermostats, lamps/thermometers, relays, etc. The focus was on schools, heavy industry, healthcare/veterinary, households, and steel/ scrap metal sources. Public comment was solicited last fall and incorporated, and they are currently developing a communication strategy.

2) Education/outreach was identified as being important. They developed toolkits addressing open burning, pharmaceuticals, and electronic waste. The toolkits also address science about why the issue is important, local regulations, and Best Management Practices (BMPs). They have gone out to speak to numerous stakeholders and have also used toolkits at the Great Lakes 2008 Earth Day Challenge in which we challenged stakeholders to hold collection events for unwanted medications and electronic wastes. They held 140 events and are still tallying totals but so far have collected 3.8 million pills (goal 1 million pills) and collected 300,000 lbs of e-waste (goal 1 million lbs). We’ll have a final report on that fairly shortly.

3) The Great Lakes Sport Fish Consortium Project is designed to develop mercury protocols for sensitive populations. They are working with the Wisconsin Department of Health and developing toolkits for youth education, healthcare education and culinary school education. That should be done this fiscal year.

4) They have convened a workgroup to address mercury emission reductions and are in the process of developing sectors that we want to address. The goal is to have a strategy within a year.

- **Clean Boats Initiative:** James Schardt (USEPA - GLNPO) provided a report on the Clean Boats Initiative. The focus of this initiative is on recreational boater education. There are 4.3 million boats registered in the Great Lakes states and \$16 billion per year is spent on boating. In the 2008 Sustainable Recreation Boating Initiative they hope to hold events that show that adopting simple practices can substantially prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. Participants will be taught to properly inspect, clean, and drain their boats at various events. This will be officially announced later this month with educational materials and a list of events.
- **Beaches Initiative:** Melissa Soline (Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative) provided highlights of this project for 2008. It entails efforts to focus on Great Lakes Coastal Health as a high priority. There is a Work Group consisting of federal, state, tribal, local and beach association representatives. They are working to improve and utilize standard annual and routine sanitary survey forms that were developed in the 2007 beach season. The forms have been refined and were first distributed at the beginning of May. They also launched a webpage on the GLRC website which contains examples of completed forms, as well as a range of other beach management resources. The Beaches Initiative is planning a broader launch of sanitary surveys for May 30th in WI.
- 4. **Potential Future Initiatives:** Gary Gulezian (USEPA - GLNPO) indicated that GLNPO is considering additional joint initiatives to advance the GLRC Strategy in the future and that they are interested in suggestions for projects. We'd like you to use comment link on the GLRC website <http://www.glrc.us> to provide any ideas or suggestions.

The next section of the call focused on reviewing the status of discussion on the four key elements raised in earlier meetings and calls and described below. Dave Ullrich (Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative) and member of the GLRC Executive Subcommittee provided a recap of discussion on the suggestions.

1. **Improving Communications and Increasing Transparency:** The suggestion was made earlier to prepare a draft Communication Plan and to take other steps to increase transparency. Following are the highlights of points made on the call:

- Regarding the suggestion for development of a draft Communication Plan, the GLRC Subcommittee decided it was more efficient to use the GLIN-Announce listserv along with improvements to the GLRC Website. They are also focused on trying to utilize better media techniques on the ground rather than building another plan.
- They have made significant improvements to the GLRC Website.
- The GLRC Subcommittee has not yet reached a conclusion about whether or not to include outside observers to the GLRC Executive Committee and Subcommittee meetings. More discussion is needed.
- They have added lists of the members of the Executive Committee and Subcommittee to the GLRC Website, along with contacts for each of the GLRC Initiatives.
- They have not yet determined whether agendas/ minutes/summaries of the GLRC Executive Committee meetings/ calls should be added to the Website.
- They are using GLIN-Announce rather than the list server capacity to share information.

2. **Building Collaboration:** Several ideas were offered on earlier calls to improve collaboration. Following is a recap of the status of some of the key proposals:

- They intend to continue these calls as the primary vehicle for stakeholder collaboration.
- At this point they are not planning to do another big Great Lakes meeting in 2008 but are open to it as needed in the future. They would like to tag onto another event if another meeting is scheduled.

- They plan to hold 8 state workshops this summer on the Habitat/Wetlands Initiatives.
- Great Lakes Day in Washington, DC was a big success again.

3. **Tracking and Assessing Progress:** Following is the current status of thinking on the proposal to develop an Implementation Plan for the GLRC Strategy.

- They decided that developing an Implementation Plan was not the best use of everyone's time. Instead, they will be focusing efforts on implementation of the specific GLRC Initiatives described above.

4. **Other:** Following is the current perspective of the Subcommittee on the idea of developing a regional governance structure to better link high level management of implementation of the Strategy w/ on the ground implementation entities:

- Two meetings have been held with Ducks Unlimited to brainstorm organizational options, particularly joint management models. The Subcommittee believes that it is not advisable to establish any new organizational entities at this time. They prefer to optimize links for the GLRC Initiatives through existing organizational entities.

5. **Announcements:**

- There is a HOW conference in Milwaukee on September 10-12, 2008.
- There is a Great Lakes Legacy Act oversight hearing on May 21, 2008 before the Water Resources Subcommittee. Comments are welcome and can be submitted for the committee reports within a week after the hearing.
- There is a Lake Michigan Watershed conference on May 20-22, 2008.
- There will be an Annual Regional AOC conference on September 24-25 in Ann Arbor, Michigan.
- Lake Superior Day will be held on July 20, 2008.

6. **Next Steps:** The following next steps were identified:

- GLNPO will arrange for a summary of the call to be developed.
- We will continue these calls for the Subcommittee to engage with stakeholders.