



NEWS RELEASE

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EPA head: Great Lakes a major driver in U.S. water policy

Washington, D.C. – “As the Great Lakes go, so goes the national policy as to water,” said Lisa Jackson, administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency speaking today at the semiannual meeting of the Great Lakes Commission in Washington, D.C.

Jackson noted that President Barack Obama established his commitment to Great Lakes protection early in his campaign and continues to demonstrate that commitment through such legislative vehicles as the American Recovery Act, the recently passed stimulus bill.

“We look at the Act as extremely important to restoring infrastructure,” she said.

A former commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Jackson commiserated with the Great Lakes Commission’s work in mitigating point-source pollution, specifically the EPA-designated Areas of Concern.

“Removal of persistent toxins is really necessary,” she said. “It is expensive and takes a lot of time but we will continue.”

The administrator pledged to work to reverse the previous Administration to increase funding to clean up Areas of Concern.

“Her remarks were really refreshing, especially her pledge to work to increase support for cleaning up Areas of Concern,” noted Todd Ambs, vice chair of the Commission and Water Division administrator, Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources.

With an underlying theme at the meeting of environmental restoration of the Great Lakes as an economic development strategy, Commission Chair and Illinois Governor Pat Quinn exhorted the Commission member states and Canadian provinces to maximize the potential of the lakes to lure new business and investment.

Past Commission Chair Michigan Lt. Gov. John Cherry echoed that sentiment, saying that our two basic policy priorities are now more intertwined than ever: “Increasing environmental stewardship for the Great Lakes is now clearly recognized by business, trade groups and regional Chambers of Commerce as key to the transformation of our regional economy.”

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Great Lakes Commission

Gov. Patrick Quinn (IL), Chair; Tim A. Eder, Executive Director

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Joe Roman, director of the Greater Cleveland Partnership, presented the regional chamber's "Business Agenda for Economic Transformation in the Great Lakes Region" at a panel session on Monday.

Among actions taken by the Commission were resolutions endorsing reauthorization of the Coastal Zone Management Act, supporting reform of the Harbor Maintenance Tax and Trust Fund, and supporting the American Wind Energy Association's upcoming Windpower Conference in Chicago.

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The Great Lakes Commission, chaired by Illinois Gov. Patrick Quinn, is an interstate compact agency established under state and U.S. federal law and dedicated to promoting a strong economy, healthy environment and high quality of life for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region and its residents. The Commission consists of governors' appointees, state legislators and agency officials from its eight member states. Associate membership for Ontario and Québec was established through the signing of a "Declaration of Partnership." The Commission maintains a formal Observer program involving U.S. and Canadian federal agencies, tribal authorities, binational agencies and other regional interests. The Commission offices are located in Ann Arbor, Michigan.