



**Committee of Advisors
to the
Great Lakes Fishery Commission**



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**ADVISORS TO THE GREAT LAKES FISHERY COMMISSION PASS RESOLUTIONS ADDRESSING
CORMORANT MANAGEMENT, CANADA’S FISHERIES ACT, AND FUNDING FOR THE
U.S. NATIONAL SEA GRANT PROGRAM**

TORONTO, ONTARIO—The U.S. and Canadian Advisors to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission recently came together to discuss a number of issues pertaining to the Great Lakes fishery during the Commission’s 63rd annual meeting in Toronto, Ontario. The Committee of Advisors is comprised of citizens who represent varied interests, including recreational and commercial fishing, academia, local and tribal governments, and the public-at-large. The Committee of Advisors meets regularly to consider issues, share information, and provide input to governments about the management of the shared Great Lakes fishery. Often, the committee is able to act as a whole, reflecting the concerns and opinions of advisors from both countries. This year, the committee passed three binational resolutions pertaining to issues affecting the entire basin, described below.

1. A Resolution in Support of Double-Crested Cormorant Management

Over the past three decades, populations of double-crested cormorants (cormorants) have increased extensively and, in some areas are having a significant negative impact on fisheries. An adult cormorant consumes approximately one pound (0.45 kg) of fish—including alewife, yellow perch and smallmouth bass—per day. Cormorants are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in the United States and the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act in Ontario. Due to these legal protections, there are few tools available to manage growing populations, despite their negative impacts on fisheries, which result in significant economic loss; loss of jobs; property damage; and enormous ecological, social and cultural impacts. In May 2016, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Public Resource Depredation Order of 2003, which allowed 24 states—including all states in the Great Lakes basin—to undertake cormorant control was rescinded, contingent upon the completion of an environmental assessment by the USFWS. Despite strong public support, this assessment has not yet been completed. The Canadian and U.S. Committee of Advisors resolution strongly urges the Commission to take a role in advocating and lending long-term support for policies and measurements for cormorant management, where populations have been shown to negatively impact the fishery and the ecosystem. The Advisors’ resolution also calls upon the Commission to lead an effort among the USFWS, the Mississippi Flyway Council, the Canadian Wildlife Service, Parks Canada, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, the Council of Lake Committees, and other relevant agencies and organizations to work together to develop an overarching, long-term plan for Great Lakes-wide cormorant control. The resolution also states the Advisors’ support for H.R. 4429, introduced by Representative Jack Bergman of Michigan, which directs the Secretary of the Interior to reissue a rule relating to extension of the expiration dates for Double-Crested Cormorant Depredation Orders. Finally, the resolution calls upon the Ontario government to list cormorants under Section 5(2)(a) of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, which includes species that are common in Ontario. The joint resolution is available at: http://www.glfc.org/pubs/pdfs/resol2018_1.pdf.

2. A Resolution Regarding Implementation of the Canada Fisheries Act

On February 6, 2018, the Government of Canada introduced Bill 68, proposing changes to the Canada Fisheries Act, which are currently under public review. The changes include broadening species protected by the act to include all fish species and includes reinstatement of prevention of “harmful alteration, disruption or destruction of fish habitat” consistent with the foci on biodiversity and the ecosystem approach that guides management of the Great Lakes. Additional proposed changes include:

The Committee of Advisors consists of both U.S. and Canadian representatives, from First Nation, commercial, recreational, academic, agency, and public fishery interests in the Great Lakes Basin. Advisors provide advice to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission; U.S. advisors are nominated by the State Governors, and appointed by the Commission. Canadian advisors are nominated by the Ontario Minister of Natural Resources and appointed by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

- requirement that fish stock rebuilding must be considered for stock management decisions, with prioritization of restoration, not simply protection, when assessing future developments;
- improved control and eradication of aquatic invasive species (AIS); and,
- improvements to monitoring and enforcement.

The Canadian and U.S. Committee of Advisors unanimously passed a resolution providing support for the proposed changes to the Fisheries Act, and calling on the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to work with Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry to develop strategies to rehabilitate fish stocks, control AIS, prioritize fish habitat restoration acts, and coordinate recovery actions for species at risk. The resolution also urged the Commission to advocate for the dedication of Great Lakes-specific funds for implementation of the revised Fisheries Act in the Great Lakes basin. Advisors requested that these funds be coordinated with additional dedicated funds—such as those generated through habitat compensation agreements and the Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health—to form a Canadian Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to be used to fulfill the new requirements of the Fisheries Act and strategically address the backlog of fishery impairments throughout the basin. The resolution is available at:

http://www.glfc.org/pubs/pdfs/resol2018_2.pdf.

3. **A Resolution in Support of Funding for the National Sea Grant College Program**

Approximately 95% of the Sea Grant’s funds are used by state programs to provide business, industry, agencies, policymakers and the people with the science they need to sustain coasts, waters, and communities. The U.S. fiscal 2018 budget eliminated funding for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s National Sea Grant Program; Congress restored Sea Grants funding to the 2017 level of \$85 million. Federal funding to the National Sea Grant College Program is leveraged with matching funds provided by states, universities, and other sources by at least one additional dollar in nonfederal resources for every federal dollar provided. The Canadian and U.S. Committee of Advisors passed a resolution urging the Commission and all affiliated agencies to support funding the Sea Grant program at \$85 million in fiscal year 2019 and undertake necessary efforts to prevent reductions to Sea Grant’s budget. The Commission is also requested to communicate the Advisors’ resolution to Congress. The resolution calls on the federal government to maintain Sea Grant and take necessary action to ensure it has the funding and tools necessary to continue to support states and communities around the United States’ salt- and freshwater coasts. A copy is available at: http://www.glfc.org/pubs/pdfs/resol2018_3.pdf.

Dr. Tom Whillans of Trent University, chair of the Canadian Committee of Advisors, said, “The binational support for these three resolutions, which address a variety of issues impacting the ability to effectively manage the Great Lakes fishery, is indicative of the diversity of interests and scope of knowledge possessed by the advisors that serve on our committee. The issues discussed during the advisors’ annual meeting span science, policy, and education. The Committee of Advisors is comprised of dedicated and driven individuals who are deeply committed to strengthening cooperation, enhancing science, and driving policies which needed to protect and rehabilitate the Great Lakes and its world-class fishery.”

“All who serve on the Committee of Advisors are unified by one great cause: the health and sustainability of the Great Lakes fishery for future generations,” said Captain Denny Grinold, chair of the U.S. Committee of Advisors. “The Great Lakes have faced many challenges and it is only through cooperation among those who know the fishery, the science, the politics, and the region that we can face these challenges head on. The Great Lakes, and the \$7 billion fishery they support, require us to be objective, utilize science to inform policy, and work together.”

Jim McKane, Chair of the Commission, stated: “The Great Lakes Fishery Commission appreciates the hard work and dedication of its Advisors. The Commission is receptive to the recommendations provided in the resolutions and will take appropriate action.”