



Great Lakes Fishery Commission

ESTABLISHED BY CONVENTION BETWEEN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES TO IMPROVE AND PERPETUATE FISHERY RESOURCES

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Contact: Marc Gaden
734-662-3209 x. 14

Great Lakes Fishery Commission Hails Signing of Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act

***Commission applauds Senators Mike DeWine and Carl Levin and
Representatives Mark Kirk and Dale Kildee for advancing legislation
to protect and restore the Great Lakes***

ANN ARBOR, MI—The Great Lakes Fishery Commission noted with great pleasure the president's signing this week of the *Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act*, major legislation designed to rehabilitate and protect the Great Lakes. The act authorizes \$16 million per year for on-the-ground restoration projects and provides the Fish and Wildlife Service with an essential tool to carry out its work in the Great Lakes region, consistent with President Bush's Executive Order for Great Lakes restoration. The commission applauded Senators Mike DeWine (OH) and Carl Levin (MI) and Representatives Mark Kirk (IL) and Dale Kildee (MI) for introducing the legislation and ensuring its success in Congress. The act signed by the president this week re-authorizes the act first passed in 1990 and re-authorized in 1998.

Congress authorized projects under the *Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act* in 1998. Since then, the act has funded many noteworthy initiatives including projects related to restoration of lake trout and other native species, walleye recruitment, the role and status of prey fish, sturgeon rehabilitation, and wetland restoration. Proposed projects are peer-reviewed, considered by a review committee, and recommend to the Director of the Fish and Wildlife

Service for funding. The act enhances the Fish and Wildlife Service's ability to make important contributions to Great Lakes restoration, improves the review process to encourage better integration of fish and wildlife projects, and increases the authorized funds available so that resource managers can focus on local and region-wide projects.

“For more than fifty years, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission has supported efforts to restore and improve the Great Lakes,” said commission vice-chairman Gerry Barnhart, Director of Fish, Wildlife, and Marine Resources for the State of New York. “The fishery alone is valued at more than \$4 billion annually. I commend Senators Mike DeWine and Carl Levin, and Representatives Mark Kirk and Dale Kildee for their commitment to the Great Lakes and for their leadership in advancing this important legislation.”

“Throughout the basin, federal, state, and tribal governments, non-government organizations, and other stakeholders are very excited about the opportunity to further restore the Great Lakes,” Barnhart continued. “The *Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act* can provide real opportunities to organize and fund a broad array of fish, wildlife, and habitat projects necessary for restoration, in support of the priorities and initiatives outlined in the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration, conducted pursuant to President's Bush's Executive Order for the Great Lakes.”

Barnhart concluded: “This act is a tremendous opportunity for the Fish and Wildlife Service to partner with states, tribes, and other entities to advance Great Lakes restoration and is a major step towards improving ecosystem management. If adequately funded, this act, with a re-invigorated emphasis by the Fish and Wildlife Service to provide additional leadership, will strengthen the cooperation valued so highly in the Great Lakes and will result in dramatic and successful enhancements in our collective efforts to restore the region's fish and wildlife resources.”