



**Statement from Council of Great Lakes Industries
Public Engagement to the Ocean Policy Task Force
Great Lakes Meeting
July 23, 2009
Council on Environmental Quality Offices
722 Jackson Place
Washington, DC**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information to the members of the Interagency Task Force on Ocean Policy and its working group on National Policy. Evelyn Strader, Director of Communications for the Council of Great Lakes Industries (CGLI) is representing the Council in the absence of George Kuper, the President of CGLI. CGLI is a nonprofit organization representing the common interests of more than two dozen U.S. and Canadian industrial organizations and associations that have investments in the Great Lakes Basin. The mission of CGLI is to promote the economic growth and vitality of the region in harmony with its human and natural resources, or sustainable development.

CGLI members and program participants have worked together and with other stakeholders to address water quality improvement needs within the Great Lakes Basin and water use needs of the Region. We are proud of the substantial progress that has been achieved. Releases of conventional pollutants and toxic substances have been dramatically reduced. Products and processes used by industries have been modified to achieve great strides in pollution prevention and application of green chemistry and green engineering principles. CGLI also worked with Great Lakes stakeholders to put the water use Compact in place in the Great Lakes.

We understand the need for Great Lakes restoration and we have been actively involved with many of the organizations represented here in the development of the restoration plan for the Great Lakes including efforts to seek financial support of the plan. We were also an active partner in the cost-benefit analysis of Great Lakes restoration produced by the Brookings Institution (*Healthy Waters, Strong Economy: The Benefits of Restoring the Great Lakes Ecosystem*). The report demonstrated that nearly two dollars in long-term economic benefits result from each restoration dollar spent. We understand that a healthy ecosystem and a strong economy are vital for our region.

We are pleased that the Council on Environmental Quality and the Interagency Task Force on Ocean Policy is interested in Great Lakes issues as you develop a National Ocean Policy and we join the other representatives from the Great Lakes region in reminding the Task Force of the uniqueness of this region and its coasts. The Great Lakes are a fresh water resource with binational treaties, State and Provincial authorities and vast regional collaboration. National marine policy for this region must

be built on this extensive stakeholder investment already in place to protect and restore the Great Lakes.

As industry we understand that while a healthy, restored ecosystem can help attract capital and industry to a region, the region must be economically competitive with other regions of the world. Policy based on science is essential to the creation of jobs and wealth for the region.

CGLI agrees that using an ecosystem approach to manage and improve our water resources is essential. Over the past two decades we have worked with Great Lakes Regional agencies through the SOLEC process and others to track our restoration progress and establish the state of the Great Lakes ecosystem. In this work, it has become clear that interagency coordination and close work with stakeholders is essential for making progress towards improved ecosystem health, strong economies, and sustainable practices. We recognize that the job is not done but are pleased to have this substantial base from which to build our ongoing programs in pursuit of sustainability goals.

Progress toward sustainability is illusive unless progress can be tracked via comprehensive environmental observations in the Great Lakes. CGLI strongly supports a unifying framework that would provide for on-going support for comprehensive environmental observations within the Great Lakes Basin. Observations of physical, chemical, and biological parameters within the Great Lakes fresh water system are critical to the management, protection, and restoration of these important natural resources. The observation programs, such as those supported regionally through the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS), are essential to the health and well-being of the Great Lakes Basin. CGLI urges the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force to support and rely on the regional associations that make up the IOOS program as a central part of the national unifying strategy.

In addition to a wealth of freshwater dependent natural resources, the Great Lakes Region is blessed to host a number of world class research organizations that generate and provide valuable observational data points and other information critical to the management and utilization of these resources. However, what is lacking is sufficient infrastructure to bring this information together from the various data providers to facilitate use of this information by managers and stakeholders. The unifying strategy needs to provide avenues to connect these diverse organizations so that they feed into and support the larger national network.

The Great Lakes Observing System (GLOS) has been under development over the past few years to play this critical facilitation role. GLOS is designed to connect the agencies that have the data and present this information in a way that will make it useful for resource managers, users and the public. The goal is to describe the physical, chemical and biological status of the Great Lakes system to these stakeholders in an easily used and continuously available format. The GLOS example demonstrates the need for developing a national strategy that capitalizes on and takes advantage of regional systems that can be woven together to meet national needs.

Based on lessons CGLI has learned from our experience in defining and working within a sustainability agenda, we make the following recommendations on the development of a framework for effective coastal and marine spatial planning:

- Use an ecosystem approach that evaluates the relative importance of all ecosystem stressors so that priorities and appropriately weighted response plans can be established.
- Make full use of stakeholders to help define, review, and evaluate Task Force information gathering and work products to ensure best possible outcomes.
- Include full support for regional observing systems to carry out the objectives of the national framework.
- Build a national strategy that puts the Great Lakes Region on an equal footing with the salt coast regions with respect to support for operation of regional observing systems.
- Develop a national framework that allows the GLOS system to fully develop its ability to support the observation, reporting, and management support needs of the Great Lakes Basin.

Thank you again for this opportunity and the Council of Great Lakes Industries would be happy to provide any additional information you may need.