



CGLI Position on: Prescription for Great Lakes Ecosystem Protection and Restoration

Industry has reviewed the December 2005 white paper produced by a group of academic, and environmental group scientists entitled Prescription for Great Lakes Ecosystem Protection and Restoration (Avoiding the Tipping Point of Irreversible Changes). The following summarizes industries' position.

Industry Agrees with the Ecosystem Approach

Industry agrees with the Prescription's advocacy of a "systematic ecosystem approach to environmental management of the Great Lakes." CGLI has consistently endorsed the ecosystem approach as opposed to trying to deal separately with individual stressors. That is one of the reasons industry has supported the State of the Lakes Ecosystem Conference (SOLEC) program and its approach to assessing ecosystem status since its inception in 1994. SOLEC results have shown that invasive species, overfishing, toxics, land use practices and nutrient loading all can have impacts on the Lakes. Understanding how these stressors may act together to impact the ecosystem in interconnected ways is an important continuing need identified by the Prescription that industry supports.

Industry Agrees with Management Objectives

The management objectives – advanced in the Prescription – for the ecosystem include to:

- Restore and enhance the self-regulating critical mechanism of the Great Lakes, specifically the critical nearshore areas
- Remediate existing and prevent major new sources of eco-system stress on a basinwide basis
- Protect existing healthy elements by adopting sustainable development practices
- Measure ecosystem health and the progress of restoration.

Industry supports these management objectives, in principle, for the Great Lakes ecosystem.

Industry Disagrees that the Basin Ecosystem is Reaching a Tipping Point

Industry supported by scientifically based SOLEC reviews differs from the Prescription's assessment that current levels of stress are about to destroy the self-recovery mechanism of the eco-system. The claim that the basin eco-system has reached, or is about to reach, "the tipping point" – or, a point beyond which it will be impossible for the eco-system to recover from one or more stressors – is a generalized assertion that ignores the results of much scientific enquiry.

SOLEC, through its ecosystem status assessments over the past 10 years, has documented the recovery progress of the Lakes from some stressors. In addition SOLEC has identified the relative importance of all stressors, and encouraged the implementation of new efforts to address more recently recognized stressors.