



NEWS & UPDATES



Register Now for the 2018 Annual Meeting & Conference!

Join us for the Great Lakes & St. Lawrence Cities Initiative's 2018 Annual Meeting & Conference: *Charting a Course to Resilience* this June 13-15, 2018 in Ajax, Ontario! This year's theme explores solutions to extreme weather problems in Great Lakes-St. Lawrence communities and opportunities to bolster municipal resilience. Featured guest speakers will include Dr. Dianne Saxe, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, and Dan Egan, author of *The Death and Life of the Great Lakes*. For more information and to register, visit <https://greatlakesajax2018.eventbrite.ca>.

Cities Initiative All Member Webinar - RESCHEDULED

The Cities Initiative's spring All-Member Webinar has been rescheduled for Wednesday, April 11th at 11:30 Central/12:30 PM Eastern. The webinar will provide an opportunity for Cities Initiative staff to update the membership on current projects such as the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Collaborative and Asian carp, staffing updates, and for members to give input on organizational strategic planning. Members will be given time at the end to ask questions, provide local updates, and request information on additional topics of interest. Please register for the webinar as soon as you can at the following link: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/1519906989311090434>

Cities Initiative Submits Comments on Racine Diversion Application

Following its March 7th oral comments, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative submitted written comments to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources regarding the City of Racine's Water Diversion Application. To read the Cities Initiative's comments, [click here](#). In the comments, the Cities Initiative recommends the WI DNR hold the application until a thorough consultation and review of the application is completed. In addition to the Cities Initiative, numerous other groups from Wisconsin and the Great Lakes Area submitted comments regarding the diversion application.

Ohio EPA Declares Lake Erie as Impaired

In late March, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency released its 2018 water quality report, which proposed designating the open waters of Lake Erie's Western Basin as impaired due to harmful algal blooms. The designation indicates the open waters of Lake Erie do not meet federal or state water quality goals under the Clean Water Act. While the impairment designation is not expected to be a silver bullet to the Lake Erie algal problem, regional stakeholders are hopeful the designation will spur action to reduce phosphorus pollution and subsequent harmful algal blooms. For more information, [click here](#).

Michigan Approves Nestle Water Withdrawal Increase Permit

Last Monday, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality announced its approval of a permit allowing Nestle to increase its water withdrawals in Osceola County well near Evart, MI. Despite opposition from over 80,000 public comments as well as Osceola Township, the permit allows Nestle to boost their water withdrawals from 250 to 400 gallons per minute. The permit also requires Nestle to institute a monitoring plan to provide oversight of nearby wetlands prior to increasing its pumping. For more information, [click here](#).

Omnibus Spending Bill Provides Full Funding for GLRI

In its \$1.3 trillion omnibus spending bill, U.S. Congress maintained full funding of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative at \$300 million. The spending bill also includes funding for the Clean Water Fund at \$1.693 billion and the Safe Drinking Water Fund at \$1.163 billion, both with \$300 million increases. In addition, the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) and Water Infrastructure Improvements to the Nation (WIIN) Act grants received large boosts in the bill with funding at \$63 million and \$50 million respectively. The bill also includes rider encouraging the Army Corp of Engineers to submit its Chief's Report on the Brandon Road Lock & Dam study by February 2019. For additional details, [click here](#).

Cities Initiative Participates in Compact Procedures Update Discussions

As a follow-up to its August 2017 Waukesha water diversion challenge settlement agreement, the Cities Initiative participated in a meeting to discuss updates to the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Water Resource Compact Council's procedures for considering water diversions. The meeting, organized by the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers, brought together dozens of stakeholders from around the Great Lakes & St. Lawrence Basin, including First Nations, tribes, states, and non-governmental organizations, to develop draft updates to the Compact Council's process and procedures, which will be considered and potentially adopted by the Compact Council later this year. The Cities Initiative will continue to participate in the proceedings to ensure municipal perspectives are considered.

IJC and Governor Cuomo Clash Over Lake Ontario Outflows

Following record outflows for February, the International Joint Commissions dialed back Lake Ontario outflows on March 29th, spurring backlash from New York officials, including Governor Andrew Cuomo. In a [letter](#) to IJC Chair Lana Pollack, Governor Cuomo called on the IJC to maintain or increase the outflow levels in an effort to limit flood risks along Lake Ontario. Some municipalities along New York's Lake Ontario shores have echoed Governor Cuomo's calls to the IJC and instituted measures to mitigate potential flooding damage in their communities. For more information, [click here](#).

US Steel Settles Chromium Spill Lawsuit

Last Monday, US Steel agreed to settle a complaint against the company due to its hexavalent chromium spill in April of last year, which violated the Clean Water Act. The settlement requires that US Steel pay penalties of around \$300,000 to state and federal environmental agencies as well as nearly \$250,000 for environmental damages. The proposed settlement is open for a 30-day comment period until May 7th. To read or comment on the proposed settlement, [click here](#).

US Mayors Pledge to Resist EPA's Proposed Fuel Efficiency Rollback

Following an announcement from the US EPA to rollback nationwide vehicle fuel efficiency standards, mayors from more than 50 cities are vowing to resist these changes. The mayors, as well as 12 attorneys general, are defending Obama-era fuel efficiency standards from 2012 requiring 50 miles per gallon by 2025 for new cars and light trucks. To read the Local Leaders' Clean Cars Declaration, [click here](#).

Seeking Nominations for the 2018 Wege Award

The Wege Small Cities Sustainability Best Practices Award is a \$5,000 award to a Cities Initiative member city (population less than 100,000) working to protect the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence and improve the quality of the water resource for future generations. For more information and the nomination form, visit <https://glsicities.org/resources/awards-and-funding/>. Nominations are due by May 15, 2018.

EVENTS & WEBINARS

Cities Initiative Member Webinar RESCHEDULED

An opportunity for Cities Initiative staff to update the membership on current projects and operations, and for members to give input on organizational strategic planning.

April 11, 2018

11:30am-12:30pm Central

12:30 pm-1:30 pm Eastern

[Click here to register.](#)

Great Lakes Economic Forum

Hosted by the Council of the Great Lakes Region, the Great Lakes Economic Forum is dedicated to creating a more favorable and sustainable business climate in the Great Lakes Region.

May 3-5, 2018

Montreal, QC

[Click here for more information and to register.](#)

Use promo code GLEF2018 for 15% off.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES - BINATIONAL

Great Lakes Protection Fund RFP

GLPF seeks action-oriented projects to design, deploy, and evaluate new prototype solutions to important challenges facing our ecosystem. All projects must demonstrate improvements to ecosystem health.

Pre-Proposal Deadline: April 23, 2018, 8 AM CST

For more information, FAQs and project examples, [click here](#).

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES - CANADA

CN EcoConnexions *From the Ground Up*

CN EcoConnexions *From the Ground Up* is providing more than a half million dollars in funding for greening projects in Canadian communities. This year, 25 communities will be awarded greening grants of up to \$25,000.

Deadline: April 18, 2018

[Click here for more information.](#)

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES - US

Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act Financing

WIFIA is a new federal credit program administered by US EPA for eligible water and wastewater infrastructure projects. WIFIA can fund development and implementation activities for projects like: 1). Wastewater conveyance and treatment projects; 2). Drinking water treatment and distribution projects; 3). Enhanced energy efficiency projects at drinking water and wastewater facilities

Deadline: TBD

It is anticipated there will be another round of applications for WIFIA at the end of the year, assuming the federal appropriations are authorized by October.

To learn more about the program, [click here](#).

US Forest Service Funding

The US Forest Service anticipates approximately \$3.7 million in GLRI funding for tree planting and native vegetation restoration in the Great Lakes Basin.

Deadline: May 11, 2018

[Click here for more information.](#)