



Committee of Advisors to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission



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ADVISORS TO THE GREAT LAKES FISHERY COMMISSION PASS RESOLUTIONS ADDRESSING FISHERY RESTORATION, FUNDING, AND ENFORCEMENT

DULUTH, MINNESOTA—The U.S. and Canadian Advisors to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission recently came together to discuss a number of critical issues during the Commission's 62nd annual meeting in Duluth, Minnesota. The Committee of Advisors, comprising citizens who provide advice to the commission, 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; there are certain issues or situations, however, whereby advisors from one country may elect to abstain from a resolution. This year, the committee passed two binational resolutions pertaining to issues affecting the entire basin and three U.S.-only resolutions related to U.S. funding and legislation, described below.

Binational Resolutions

- 1. Resolution Calling for Strengthened Financial Commitments from Canada and U.S. to Protect and Restore the Great Lakes** – The health of the Great Lakes ecosystem and sustainability of its fisheries, valued at more than \$7 billion annually, is dependent upon a strong commitment from the governments of Canada and the United States. Funding is required from both countries to: deliver on their respective commitments to restore native species and their habitats; improve water quality; protect against invasive species, remediate contaminated sites; and, support science, monitoring, and assessment efforts to provide a better understanding of this world-class resource. Advisors noted that while Prime Minister Trudeau has made it a priority to renew Canada's commitment to protect the Great Lakes, President Trump has proposed massive funding cuts to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, Environmental Protection Agency (including closure or relocation of the Great Lakes offices), Asian Carp prevention efforts, Great Lakes harbor maintenance and dredging, and the National Sea Grant Program. The Canadian and U.S. Committee of Advisors strongly urge both federal governments to invest in Great Lakes protection at a level that reflects the ecological, social, and economic value of the Great Lakes. The Advisors specifically request that Canada increase its financial contributions to Great Lakes protection and restoration and that the U.S. maintain and enhance existing programs and financial contributions, rather than reduce or eliminate vital programs as proposed in the President's 2018 budget proposal. The U.S. Advisors passed additional resolutions specifically addressing the proposed cuts to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the Environmental Protection Agency, which are described overleaf. The joint resolution is available at: http://www.glfc.org/pubs/pdfs/resol2017_5.pdf.
- 2. A Resolution in Support of Restoring Coregonines in the Great Lakes**
The Great Lakes historically held a unique complex of coregonines (common name ciscoes). Multiple forms existed, inhabiting the deepest waters of the lakes to surface and inshore areas. They were the primary prey for lake trout, the native top predator, until a combination of overfishing, sea lamprey predation, and habitat loss caused a dramatic decline in their populations—including extirpation of some forms—throughout the Great Lakes in the 20th century. Over the past two decades, the science concerning coregonid restoration has advanced significantly. Today, two forms of coregonines—*coregonus-artedi* and *coregonus-hoyi* (Bloater)—are being reared successfully in hatcheries, with a third form, *coregonus-artedi albus*, scheduled for production in 2018. Reintroduction efforts are underway in Lakes Ontario and Huron and are being considered for Lake Michigan. The Canadian and U.S. Committees of

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.

Advisors urge the Commission to work with all fishery management agencies to prioritize coregonid restoration and develop a Great Lakes-wide strategy to determine the species or forms of coregonines of greatest relevance to each lake, ensuring the best available science is utilized. The Advisors also urge the Commission to support ongoing research to support future restoration efforts. The resolution is available at: http://www.glfcc.org/pubs/pdfs/resol2017_4.pdf.

U.S. Resolutions

- 1. A Resolution in Support of Funding for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** – The President's 2018 budget for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency provides \$5.655 billion to support the agency's work to protect human health and the environment. If approved, this funding level would cut the EPA's total budget by more than 30% and its operational budget by 35% compared to current funding levels. The U.S. Committee of Advisors recognizes that since its existence, the EPA has undertaken numerous actions that have led to the successful rehabilitation of the Great Lakes fishery and ecosystem. The Advisors expressed concern about the recommended budget cut as well as the Administration's proposed closure of the EPA's Great Lakes National Program Office and the relocation of EPA's Region 5 office to Kansas. The resolution calls on the federal government to maintain the EPA and take necessary action to ensure it has the authority, funding, and tools necessary to protect the Great Lakes watershed. A copy is available at: http://www.glfcc.org/pubs/pdfs/resol2017_1.pdf.
- 2. A Resolution in Opposition of Proposed Funding Cuts to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)** – For the past seven years, the GLRI has provided federal funds to help restore habitat and wetlands, clean up toxic pollution, address the threat of invasive species, such as the Asian carp, and conduct research in support of a healthy Great Lakes fishery. Funds provided through the GLRI have been instrumental in helping the United States fulfill its commitments under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. In 2015, the U.S. and Canadian Committee of Advisors passed a resolution calling for permanent funding of the GLRI and in 2016, the 114th Congress authorized the GLRI with broad, bipartisan support. Despite that authorization, the President's 2018 budget calls for the complete elimination of the GLRI. The resolution calls on Congress to restore GLRI funding to a level of \$300 million annually to allow for continuation of the critical restoration that is so vital to the Great Lakes region's ecology, economy, and quality of life. A copy of the resolution is available online at: http://www.glfcc.org/pubs/pdfs/resol2017_2.pdf.
- 3. A Resolution Concerning Interstate Shipment of Live Injurious Animals**
Since the 1960s, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has interpreted the Lacey Act as giving them authority to prohibit interstate shipments of federally designated live injurious animals. This authority was recently challenged in federal court and the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals' ruling has removed the USFWS' authority to regulate interstate movement of injurious species. The Great Lakes are home to more than 180 non-native species, many of which have caused significant harm to the ecosystem, native species, humans, and local economies. The risk of additional species being intentionally or unintentionally introduced is increased significantly by this ruling. The U.S. Committee of Advisors urges the language of the Lacey Act be amended to clarify that the USFWS has authority to prohibit interstate shipment of live injurious animals. A copy of this resolution is available at: http://www.glfcc.org/pubs/pdfs/resol2017_3.pdf.

"The Committee of Advisors is comprised of dedicated and knowledgeable representatives of the commercial fishery, the sport fishery, the public, academia, First Nations, and our natural resource agencies," said Captain Denny Grinold, chair of the U.S. Committee of Advisors. "We had a productive meeting in Duluth with robust discussions on a variety of issues. We are deeply committed to the Great Lakes, to the value of science, and to ensuring this resource is prioritized by our respective governments."

Dr. Tom Whillans of Trent University, chair of the Canadian Committee of Advisors, said, "As Advisors, we come together at our binational forum to discuss key issues facing the Great Lakes and to draw attention to areas of concern. Three of these resolutions specifically address our governments' commitment to funding programs that have proven beneficial for the ecosystem. If these programs are not maintained, we risk forfeiting significant progress in Great Lakes recovery. If governments were to allow us to regress to where we were decades ago, the fishery would suffer, the environment would be in a shambles, and the people of the region would face the loss of this irreplaceable resource and the hundreds of thousands of jobs it supports."

"The Great Lakes Fishery Commission values the input it receives from its Advisors and will take appropriate action on these well-conceived resolutions," said David Ullrich, the Commission's chairman.