Great Lakes Alliance Site Main Content

**ABOUT**

About Alliance for the Great Lakes

The Alliance is the oldest Great Lakes organization devoted 100 percent to the lakes. Our professional staff works with scientists, policymakers, businesses, community groups and everyday citizens to protect and restore the world's largest surface freshwater resource.

From forging forward-looking Great Lakes policies to promoting Great Lakes education to on-the-ground efforts to improve thousands of miles of Great Lakes shoreline, we've been out front and behind the scenes caring for the lakes since 1970.

Learn more about [*our programs*](http://www.greatlakes.org/ourprograms), the [*issues we address*](http://greatlakes.org/issues) and how you can [*get involved*](http://www.greatlakes.org/getinvolved).

OUR MISSION

 Our mission at the Alliance for the Great Lakes is to conserve and restore the world's largest freshwater resource using policy, education and local efforts, ensuring a healthy Great Lakes and clean water for generations of people and wildlife.

STAFF PAGE

 Alliance staff have expertise in water quality and water conservation, invasive species and Great Lakes restoration, education and environmental policy. Based in Chicago, the Alliance also has offices in Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee and Grand Haven, Mich.

If you are a member of the media and would like to speak with one of our experts, please see our [*staff experts*](http://greatlakes.org/StaffExperts) page.

Alliance Diversity Statement

The Alliance for the Great Lakes values the diversity inherent in the ecological and human communities that it serves. To fulfill our mission to protect and restore the Great Lakes for all generations, we work to be inclusive of all people regardless of age, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, family status, spirituality, education, geographic location, social and economic class, and physical and mental ability.

**Alliance Staff**

[Joel Brammeier](http://www.greatlakes.org/Document.Doc?id=610" \t "jbbio)  
President & CEO  
312-445-9727  
[*jbrammeier@greatlakes.org*](mailto:jbrammeier@greatlakes.org)

[Todd Brennan](http://www.greatlakes.org/Document.Doc?id=309" \t "tbbio)  
Watershed Project Manager, Wisconsin  
414-559-0317  
[*tbrennan@greatlakes.org*](mailto:tbrennan@greatlakes.org)

[Jennifer Caddick](http://www.greatlakes.org/document.doc?id=1469" \t "Jen Caddick bio 2013)  
Engagement Director  
312-445-9760  
[*jcaddick@greatlakes.org*](mailto:jcaddick@greatlakes.org)

[Susan Campbell](http://www.greatlakes.org/Document.Doc?id=78)  
Communications Manager  
414-540-0699  
[*scampbell@greatlakes.org*](mailto:scampbell@greatlakes.org)

Jamie Cross  
Adopt-a-Beach™ Manager  
616-850-0745 ext. 12  
[*jcross@greatlakes.org*](mailto:jcross@greatlakes.org)

[Nate Drag](http://www.greatlakes.org/document.doc?id=1272" \t "dragbio)  
Watershed Project Coordinator, New York  
716-261-9393  
[*ndrag@greatlakes.org*](mailto:ndrag@greatlakes.org)

[Judy Freed](http://www.greatlakes.org/Document.Doc?id=232)  
Marketing Strategist  
312-445-9751  
[*jfreed@greatlakes.org*](mailto:jfreed@greatlakes.org)

Ruth Perret Goluboff  
Community Coordinator  
312-445-9732  
[*rgoluboff@greatlakes.org*](mailto:rgoluboff@greatlakes.org)

Rebecca LaGesse  
Database Manager  
312-445-9747  
[*rlagesse@greatlakes.org*](mailto:rlagesse@greatlakes.org)

[Angela Larsen](http://www.greatlakes.org/Document.Doc?id=1022)  
Community Resilience Manager  
312-445-9746  
[*alarsen@greatlakes.org*](mailto:alarsen@greatlakes.org)

[Katharine Larson](http://www.greatlakes.org/Document.Doc?id=1027)  
Education Manager  
312-445-9726  
[*klarson@greatlakes.org*](mailto:klarson@greatlakes.org)

[Michelle Liebetreu](http://www.greatlakes.org/document.doc?id=1278)  
Institutional Development Manager  
857-399-6219  
[*mliebetreu@greatlakes.org*](mailto:mliebetreu@greatlakes.org)

Khalil Ligon  
Southeast Michigan Outreach Coordinator  
313-447-0132  
[*kligon@greatlakes.org*](mailto:kligon@greatlakes.org)

[Hyle Lowry](http://www.greatlakes.org/Document.Doc?id=1119)  
Ohio Outreach Coordinator  
216-630-8140  
[*hlowry@greatlakes.org*](mailto:hlowry@greatlakes.org)

[Olga Lyandres](http://www.greatlakes.org/Document.Doc?id=1154)  
Research Manager  
312-445-9749  
[*olyandres@greatlakes.org*](mailto:olyandres@greatlakes.org)

Bettina Marshall  
Office Manager, Chicago  
312-445-9721  
[*bmarshall@greatlakes.org*](mailto:bmarshall@greatlakes.org)

[Sarah Neville](http://www.greatlakes.org/document.doc?id=1470" \t "Sarah Neville bio 2013)  
Stewardship Coordinator  
312-445-9758  
[*sneville@greatlakes.org*](mailto:sneville@greatlakes.org)

Mary Grace Sartoris  
Development Associate  
312-445-9736  
[*msartoris@greatlakes.org*](mailto:msartoris@greatlakes.org)

[Carolyn Scholz](http://www.greatlakes.org/Document.Doc?id=448)  
Individual Philanthropy Director  
312-445-9737  
[*cscholz@greatlakes.org*](mailto:cscholz@greatlakes.org)

[Stephanie Smith](http://www.greatlakes.org/Document.Doc?id=1025)  
Vice President, Operations  
312-445-9730  
[*ssmith@greatlakes.org*](mailto:ssmith@greatlakes.org)

[Janet Taylor](http://www.greatlakes.org/Document.Doc?id=1023)  
Administrative Assistant, Grand Haven  
616-850-0745, ext. 11  
[*jtaylor@greatlakes.org*](mailto:jtaylor@greatlakes.org)

[Lyman Welch](http://www.greatlakes.org/Document.Doc?id=1187)  
Water Quality Director  
312-445-9739  
[*lwelch@greatlakes.org*](mailto:lwelch@greatlakes.org)

**Consultants**

Janice Enloe  
Graphic Designer

[Lloyd DeGrane](http://lloyddegrane.com/" \t "degranebio)  
Freelance Photographer

**CONTACT PAGE**

**Alliance Offices**

**Chicago office — Headquarters**150 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 700, Chicago, IL 60601  
Phone: 312-939-0838  
Fax: 312-939-2708  
E-mail: [alliance@greatlakes.org](mailto:alliance@greatlakes.org)  
  
**Michigan office**41 Washington Avenue, Suite 280-D, Grand Haven, MI  49417  
Phone: 616-850-0745  
Toll Free: 1-866-850-0745  
E-mail: [alliance@greatlakes.org](mailto:alliance@greatlakes.org)

**New York office**Innovation Center, Suite 439, 640 Ellicott St., Buffalo, NY 14213  
Phone: 716-261-9393  
E-mail: [NDrag@greatlakes.org](mailto:ndrag@greatlakes.org)

**Ohio office**  
PO Box 552  
Chagrin Falls, OH 44022  
Phone: 216-630-8140  
E-Mail: [HLowry@greatlakes.org](mailto:hlowry@greatlakes.org)

**Wisconsin office**1845 N. Farwell Ave., Suite 100, Milwaukee, WI  53202  
Phone: 414-559-0317  
E-mail: [TBrennan@greatlakes.org](mailto:tbrennan@greatlakes.org)

**(social media links)**

**FACEBOOK**

**TWITTER**

**YOUTUBE**

**EMAIL**

**WORK (ISSUES, PROGRAMS, and EDUCATION)**

**The Great Lakes contain nearly 20 percent of the earth’s surface freshwater, providing drinking water to more than 40 million people. A 2007 Brookings Institution report determined that a healthy, restored Great Lakes could generate $50 billion in long-term economic benefits for the region. These benefits would be enjoyed by the businesses and industry that use water for commerce, as well as by beachgoers, naturalists, boaters, anglers and homeowners.**

**Threats to the Great Lakes today are many, and range from pollution and invasive species to wasteful water use and global warming. All demand our attention and commitment.**

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*ISSUES\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

Clean Water

The Alliance's Water Quality Program is dedicated to clean water that protects the health of the people, fish and wildlife of the Great Lakes by addressing:

 [Untreated Municipal Sewage Overflows >](http://greatlakes.org/CSOs)

 [Nutrient Runoff/Algae Growth >](http://greatlakes.org/algae)

 [Pollution from Petroleum Refineries and Other Industries](http://greatlakes.org/refineries)

 [Pharmaceutical Pollution >](http://greatlakes.org/drugs)

The Alliance educates people to participate in water quality decisions affecting their health, and works with government agencies, municipalities and businesses to develop strong policies and standards. We also work to ensure agencies use their authority to protect water quality, demanding agency oversight and legal enforcement when necessary.

Conserving Water

Some 40 million people living in the Great Lakes drainage basin rely on the lakes for drinking water.

A one-time gift from the glaciers, the Great Lakes form the largest surface freshwater system on earth -- a vast but largely non-renewable resource. As the pressure on fresh water mounts around the world, the Alliance is working to ensure that these waters are maintained and protected.

Before the adoption of the historic Great Lakes Compact in 2008, the Great Lakes were governed by a number of U.S.-Canadian policies aimed at protecting and stewarding these shared waters.

[Annex 2001:](http://www.greatlakes.org/Document.Doc?id=146) In 2001 the Great Lakes governors and Canadian premiers agreed to develop new protections that would prevent harmful water withdrawals and diversions of Great Lakes waters. The Great Lakes Charter Annex, or Annex 2001, laid the groundwork for today's historic [Great Lakes Water Resources Compact](http://www.greatlakes.org/compact).

[1986 Water Resources Development Act:](http://www.greatlakes.org/Document.Doc?id=149) The act gives veto power to the governors of each of the eight Great Lakes states to block any export or diversion of Great Lakes water outside the basin. Reauthorized in 2000, the act further encourages the states to work with the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec to devise and implement a “common conservation standard” for decisions about Great Lakes basin water use and withdrawals.

[1985 Great Lakes Charter:](http://www.greatlakes.org/Document.Doc?id=148) A non-binding, voluntary agreement through which Great Lakes states and provinces agree to cooperatively manage the waters of the Great Lakes. Among the goals: establishing programs to manage and regulate diversions and consumptive uses of Great Lakes water; and seeking agreement from one another when considering a new or increased diversion or consumptive use of 5 million gallons of water per day or more.

[1909 Boundary Waters Treaty:](http://www.greatlakes.org/Document.Doc?id=147) A U.S.-Canadian treaty to deal with water flow and water quality matters for all shared waters lying along or flowing across the International Boundary. The treaty established the International Joint Commission (IJC) to oversee disputes, requiring commission review and approval of diversions that would “affect the lakes' natural flow or level,” or interfere with domestic uses, boating and navigation.

Invasive Species

The Alliance released a groundbreaking report in 2008 urging a breakup of the Mississippi River and Great Lakes basins as the only way to permanently stop the devastating Asian carp and other invasives from entering the Great Lakes.

The Alliance report, [*Preliminary Feasibility of Ecological Separation of the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes*](http://www.greatlakes.org/Document.Doc?id=473), outlines six options for separating the watersheds and ending the transfer of species between them.

The idea of restoring the natural physical barriers that once separated Lake Michigan and the rest of the Great Lakes from the Mississippi River continues to gain momentum.

Why the worry? These fish are beyond bad. Known to batter boaters when leaping from the water, the smaller silver carp joins with the 100-plus-pound bighead carp to become the poster fish for the ecologic and economic harm that comes when invading species travel between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River.

Once established in the Great Lakes, the voracious filter-feeding, fast-growing carp could quickly dominate them -- gobbling up the same food that sustains native fish populations and potentially devastating the region's $7 billion fishing industry.

**Learn More**

Fact Sheet:*"Separating Fact from Fiction"*

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*PROGRAMS\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

Our vision is that, by working with you, we can conserve and restore our Great Lakes for generations of people and wildlife. Public policy, education and local efforts are how we’ve been caring for the lakes since 1970. Key programs include:

**Clean Water, Healthy Beaches**Our policy experts protect the health of the people, fish and wildlife of the Great Lakes through reducing sewage overflows, controlling pollution from unregulated emerging contaminants, reducing stormwater runoff and curbing pollution from key industrial plants. [*more>*](http://www.greatlakes.org/cleanwater)

**Conserving Water**  
Our professional staff works with scientists, government officials, businesses and everyday citizens to develop strategies for protecting our fresh water supply and eliminating wasteful water use. Chief among these is implementation of the historic Great Lakes Compact and Agreement, a first-of-its kind model that sets a high bar for new users of Great Lakes water.[*more >*](http://www.greatlakes.org/waterconservation)

**Invasive Species**  
Invasive species foul beaches, destroy fisheries, clog water plants our economy depends on, and permanently disrupt the Great Lakes food web. Stopping invasives before they enter will save the region billions in damages and control costs, and is the only way to secure the future for a restored Great Lakes. [*more >*](http://www.greatlakes.org/invasivespecies)

**Coastal Conservation**  
The Great Lakes' coasts support the most valuable diversity of fish, wildlife and plant life in the region. We help states, cities and private landowners plan, fund and execute strategies to protect and restore these priceless freshwater shorelines while stopping destruction of existing habitats. [*more >*](http://greatlakes.org/coastal-conservation)

**Education**  
The Alliance is committed to fostering an ethic of learning, appreciation and care for the Great Lakes. Our acclaimed [Great Lakes in My World](http://greatlakes.org/glimw)K-8 and 9-12 curriculums integrate the Great Lakes into the classrooms of more than 1,125 educators with activities involving lakes, sand dunes, wetlands, human communities, history and geology -- reaching more than 25,000 students annually. [*more >*](http://www.greatlakes.org/education)

**Adopt-a-Beach™**Adopt-a-Beach™ is the Alliance’s premier volunteer program. About 10,000 participants -- individuals and families, schools and businesses – monitor pollution sources and clean Great Lakes coastlines every year. [*more >*](http://www.greatlakes.org/adoptabeach)

**Great Lakes Action Center**  
We hear it every day: “How can I make a difference?” Visit our Great Lakes Action Center, the only Great Lakes site that gives you direct contact with the decision makers that can make or break the future of the lakes. Learn about the issues that need your help, and enlist your public officials to help protect the Great Lakes! While you're there, join our Action Network to receive our monthly e-newsletter and urgent action alerts. [*more >*](http://takeaction.greatlakes.org/site/PageServer?pagename=Advocacy_Home)

**Sustainable Business**  
The Alliance recognizes that businesses can play pivotal roles in environmental and social sustainability as innovative agents of change. Our Sustainable Business initiative assists businesses in becoming better stewards of the Great Lakes and their environment. [*more >*](http://greatlakes.org/sustainablebusiness)

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*EDUCATION\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

The Alliance for the Great Lakes is dedicated to fostering an ethic of learning, appreciation and care for the Great Lakes. We offer two educational programs: Great Lakes in My World, an educator resource for kindergarten through 12th-grade that addresses Next Generation Science, Common Core and Great Lakes state learning standards, and Adopt-a-Beach™, a service learning and citizen science program tailored to all ages.

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|  | Great Lakes: Great Education    Read about teachers using Great Lakes in My World to enhance students' critical-thinking and problem-solving skills in Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit and Milwaukee.    *[learn more >](https://www.greatlakes.org/news-room-value-of-a-great-lakes-education" \t ")*  *[see publication >](http://www.greatlakes.org/document.doc?id=1417" \t ")* |

More about Great Lakes in My World and Adopt-a-Beach™ . . .

[*Great Lakes in My World K-8:*](http://www.greatlakes.org/glimw) The Alliance's newly updated Great Lakes in My World K-8 educational curriculum is designed to promote understanding of the Great Lakes among our children, as it is imperative that they learn about the value of protecting this large, yet fragile web of life. [*more >*](http://www.greatlakes.org/glimw)

*[Great Lakes in My World 9-12:](http://www.greatlakes.org/glimw" \t "glimwmain)* The Alliance’s new Great Lakes in My World 9-12 educational curriculum is designed to promote Great Lakes education for students in grades 9-12. The curriculum focuses on coastal habitats, restoration, careers and stewardship. *[more>](http://www.greatlakes.org/glimw" \t "glimwmain)*

Get Involved / Donate Your Time header

Everyone can make a distinct contribution toward ensuring a healthy future for our Great Lakes. Through responsible decision making, community involvement and partnerships, the Alliance advances its ecological mission. See how you can do your part!

Great Lakes Issues

Pollution, invasive species and wasteful water use all threaten our Great Lakes. The Alliance and our individual supporters are on the front line, predicting and responding to these threats in order to sustain a thriving ecosystem for the lakes and all their inhabitants.

**Donate**

\*\*\*\*Donate Your Time: Volunteer with the Alliance\*\*\*\*

*(Get Involved / Donate Your Time header:)*

Everyone can make a distinct contribution toward ensuring a healthy future for our Great Lakes. Through responsible decision making, community involvement and partnerships, the Alliance advances its ecological mission. See how you can do your part!

Volunteering is a rewarding way to give something back to your community and work with others who, like you, love the Great Lakes!

If you have any questions contact us at *[alliance@greatlakes.org.](mailto:alliance@greatlakes.org" \t "alliance@greatlakes.org020710)*

Adopt-a-Beach™

Thousands of volunteers -- families, schools, businesses and community groups -- participate in the Alliance's Adopt-a-Beach™ Program. Volunteer to adopt a beach year round, or for just one day in September!

We’ll keep you up to date on your donation’s impact by  
sending you:

• Our quarterly print publication, WaterMarks, including the Adopt-a-Beach™ and Annual Report special editions.

• A monthly e-newsletter about Great Lakes issues,  events and volunteer opportunities throughout the region.

• Action Alerts on timely issues where your voice can make a difference.