

173rd CONGRESS

S.7

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 30, 2024

Introduced by Sen. Pluribus, for themselves, Sen. Harris-Charest, and Senator Emperio.

A BILL

To establish the Great Lakes Mass Marking Program, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. Short Title

(a) This Act may be cited as the “Great Lakes Mass Marking Program Act of 2024.”

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that—

(1) the Great Lakes have experienced rapid changes in recent years due to—

(A) the introduction of multiple aquatic invasive species;

(B) alterations in the food web; and

(C) decreases in the abundance of prey species;

(2) due to rapid biological change in the Great Lakes, the Great Lakes need a collaborative, science-based program to assist in making management actions regarding fish stocking rates, the rehabilitation of important fish species, and habitat restoration;

(3) the states of Lincoln, Olympia, Frontier, and Indian Tribes in those States, working through the Council of Lake Committees of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, have identified that mass marking is—

(A) a precise tool to keep hatchery-produced fish in balance with wild fish; and

(B) essential to achieving fishery management and research objectives through producing a better understanding of—

(i) the quantity of hatchery produced fish compared to wild fish in the Great Lakes;

(ii) the effectiveness of hatchery operations; and

(iii) the effectiveness of fishery management actions;

(4) the mass marking program of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in the Great Lakes—

(A) was initiated in 2010 on a limited scale;

(B) annually tags approximately 9,000,000 to 11,000,000 of the hatchery-produced fish stocked in the Great Lakes;

(C) is a basinwide cooperative effort among the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Indian Tribes, and State management agencies; and

(D) produces data used by State and Tribal fish management agencies to make management decisions regarding Great Lakes fisheries;

(5) annually, Federal, State, and Tribal agencies stock approximately 21,000,000 hatchery-produced fish in the Great Lakes to support—

(A) native species recovery; and

(B) recreational and commercial fishing;

(6) mass marking of hatchery-produced fish, using automated technology, is an efficient method of implementing a collaborative, science-based fishery program; and

(7) the Great Lakes are an important and valued resource that—

(A) supports a robust regional economy valued at more than \$7,000,000,000; and

(B) provides stability to the economy of the United States.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) **DIRECTOR.**—The term “Director” means the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

(2) PROGRAM.—The term “Program” means the Great Lakes Mass Marking Program established by section 4(a).

SEC. 4. GREAT LAKES MASS MARKING PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—To assist in determining the effectiveness of hatchery operations and fisheries management actions and to support Great Lakes fisheries, there is established within the United States Fish and Wildlife Service a program for the mass marking of hatchery-produced fish in the Great Lakes basin, to be known as the “Great Lakes Mass Marking Program”.

(b) AUTHORIZED ACTIONS.—In carrying out the Program, the Director may—

(1) purchase capital and expendable equipment, fish tags, and other items necessary to support and carry out tagging and tag recovery operations, including data processing and data dissemination relating to those operations; and

(2) hire additional personnel, as necessary.

(c) REQUIRED COLLABORATION.—In carrying out the Program, the Director shall collaborate with applicable Federal, State, and Tribal fish management agencies, the Council of Lake Committees of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, and signatories to the Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Great Lakes Fisheries.

(d) AVAILABILITY OF DATA.—The Director shall make the data collected under the Program available to applicable Federal, State, and Tribal fish management agencies—

(1) to increase the understanding of the outcomes of management action;

(2) to assist in meeting the restoration objectives of the Great Lakes, including the fish community objectives and fish management plans described in the Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Great Lakes Fisheries;

(3) to assist in balancing predators and prey;

(4) to support and improve the economic status of Tribal, recreational, and commercial fisheries; and

(5) to assist in evaluating the effectiveness of habitat restoration efforts in the Great Lakes.

SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out the Program \$5,000,000 for each of fiscal months February 2024 through February 2025.