



Habitat/Wetlands Initiative

Endorsed by GLRC Executive Committee on March 2, 2007

I. Introduction

Wetlands are important for supporting wildlife, flood control and improving water quality. In the Great Lakes basin more than half of the original wetlands have been lost or degraded. While progress is being made to stem the loss and reduce impairments, alterations to wetlands are still occurring and remain a concern. Significant opportunities exist to accelerate our efforts to protect and restore Great Lakes wetlands. The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy outlined the problems stemming from wetland alterations and set goals for restoring and protecting them, recognizing that a shared vision and improved coordination of existing programs would increase the ability to achieve restoration goals.

As a first step toward achieving Regional Collaboration goals, the Great Lakes Wetlands Initiative will promote on-the-ground activities to protect and restore 200,000 acres of wetlands in the Great Lakes basin. This initiative is designed to accelerate efforts to protect and restore Great Lakes wetlands by connecting partners, programs, funding and projects. Key elements of this initiative are:

- Bringing partners together to work on wetlands restoration
- Connecting partners with necessary information on programs, funding and potential projects to make wetlands restoration happen
- Monitoring progress towards Great Lakes Wetlands Initiative goals

II. Proposed Activities

The Initiative will help partners advance wetland restoration projects by connecting partners with the information and resources they need to make projects happen. A key related effort is the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) Great Lakes Habitat Initiative to develop a database and detailed inventory of potential wetlands restoration projects. Together, the Wetlands and Habitat Initiatives along with other Great Lakes efforts will form a framework to guide cooperative wetlands restoration and protection activities in the basin.

The Subcommittee of the Executive Committee will oversee implementation of this effort. The Steering Committee of the Corps' Habitat Initiative, with government and non-government representation, will be used to help guide development and implementation

Provide a stakeholder forum for partners to communicate, leverage resources and identify shared opportunities for partnering

The Wetlands Initiative will provide an ongoing forum that brings together federal agencies, states, tribes, local governments and other Great Lakes stakeholders to make on-the-ground restoration projects happen by sharing necessary information, priorities and lessons learned. Meetings and conference calls will be held on a regular basis to facilitate communication and coordination.

Provide partners with the necessary information to facilitate collaborative restoration work

The Wetlands Initiative will connect partners with information about potential projects, programs and funding sources for working together to protect and restore wetlands.

Monitor Great Lakes wetland restoration progress

Progress will be measured and assessed against the 200,000 acre goal using the same definitions and methodology as the President's annual Earth Day Wetlands Report. Great Lakes restoration progress will be reported beginning in December 2007.