



Committee of Advisors to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission



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GREAT LAKES FISHERY COMMISSION ADVISORS PASS RESOLUTIONS ADDRESSING POLICIES AND PROGRAMS TO PROTECT AND IMPROVE GREAT LAKES FISHERIES

OTTAWA, ONTARIO—The U.S. and Canadian Committees of Advisors to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission came together during the Commission's 2024 annual meeting in Ottawa, Ontario this past June to discuss a number of issues pertaining to the Great Lakes fishery. The committees are comprised of citizens who represent varied interests, including recreational and commercial fishing, academia, local and tribal governments, and the public-at-large. The committees meet regularly to consider issues, share information, and provide input to governments about the management of the shared Great Lakes fishery. Often, the committees are able to act as a whole, reflecting the concerns and opinions of advisors from both countries. This year, the committees passed four binational resolutions pertaining to issues affecting the entire basin, described below.

1. **A Resolution Urging for the Transition of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's Canadian Budget Portfolio to Global Affairs Canada**

The proposal to move the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's (Commission) machinery of government (MOG) functions from Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) to Global Affairs Canada (GAC) was formed during the executive meeting of the Commission in May 2018. Since then, the U.S. and Canadian Committees of Advisors to the Commission have passed three resolutions in 2021, 2022, and 2023 calling on the Government of Canada to implement the change. Without a response or solution over the past three years, advisors jointly passed a resolution directing the Commission to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Commission and DFO, establishing processes and principles for the administration of the MOG change. On October 25, 2023, the Commission and DFO executed a MOU which went into effect on November 24, 2023. However, the MOU did not address the MOG interface, so Canada's fiduciary responsibilities remain with DFO while the Commission awaits response from the Prime Minister. Additionally, in November 2023, the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans (SCFO) published a report based on formal hearings from June 2023 resulting in all parties unequivocally affirming that DFO is in conflict of interest/duty. The SCFO continued on to officially recommend moving the Commission's MOG to GAC as a remedy to the structural conflict. In addition, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs presented a report to the House calling upon the Government of Canada to implement the SCFO recommendation. The 2024 resolution, passed unanimously by both the U.S. and Canadian Committee of Advisors, once again calls upon the Government of Canada, specifically the Prime Minister, to transfer the Commission's MOG functions from DFO to GAC. A copy of this resolution is available online at https://www.glfc.org/pubs/pdfs/resol2024_1.pdf.

2. **A Resolution in Support of Reauthorizing the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Through the GLRI Act of 2024**

Since 2010, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) has strategically targeted the biggest threats to the Great Lakes ecosystem. Through multi-agency collaboration, the GLRI helps to stop the spread of carp and other invasive species, restore coastline and habitats connecting streams and rivers, and clean up environmentally damaged Areas of Concern and prevent future contamination. In 2015, the U.S. and Canadian Committees of Advisors passed a resolution calling for the permanent funding of the GLRI, warning that "the lack of a permanent authority for the initiative could lead to inconsistent funding on an annual basis." To ensure continuation of this funding, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2024—a bipartisan legislation—was introduced and would reauthorize the GLRI through 2031, with an increase in funding from \$475 million to \$500 million from years 2027 to 2031. The U.S. and Canadian Committees of Advisors call for Congress to pass the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2024 to

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.

reauthorize the GLRI for the next five years and increase the allocated funds. A copy of this joint resolution is available online at https://www.glfc.org/pubs/pdfs/resol2024_2.pdf.

3. A Resolution Supporting Legislative Efforts to Establish a Canadian Version of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative as Part of Canada's Work to Establish a National Freshwater Action Plan

In March 2023, the Government of Canada announced a \$650 million investment into the Freshwater Action Plan, allocating \$420 million over ten years to support restoration and protection of the Great Lakes. The Government of Canada is currently determining the ways in which to best direct these funds to address Great Lakes priorities, and has expressed a desire to create a broader Great Lakes Restoration Initiative-style program in Canada as part of the National Freshwater Action Plan. The U.S. and Canadian Committees of Advisors resolution calls for the Government of Canada to work with stake- and rights-holders to ensure a cohesive and comprehensive strategy for the creation of this program. The committees also call for the Government of Canada to find additional resources needed to ensure the program will be adequately equipped to fully address the identified needs and goals of the Great Lakes. A copy of the joint resolution is available online at: https://www.glfc.org/pubs/pdfs/resol2024_3.pdf.

4. A Resolution Supporting the Launch and Tooling of a Fully Funded, Independent Canada Water Agency with a Substantial Great Lakes Focus

The Great Lakes are the largest freshwater system in the world—containing 21 percent of the world's surface fresh water—and are the source of drinking water for more than 40 million of people in Canada and the United States. In 2023, the Government of Canada introduced legislation to establish the Canada Water Agency (CWA) as a stand-alone entity outside of Environment and Climate Change Canada. While the legislation was tabled in November 2023, it is presumed to be adopted by Parliament in the near future, leading to the eventual launch of the agency and permanent operations. The U.S. and Canadian Committees of Advisors resolution asserts their full support of the Government of Canada's efforts to fund, establish, and launch an independent CWA as part of the actions associated with the National Freshwater Action Plan. The committees also urge the Government of Canada to ensure the Great Lakes are appropriately considered as part of all plans and proposals reviewed during the establishment and tooling phases of the CWA, and that Great Lakes stake- and rights-holders—such as the Great Lakes Fishery Commission—are consulted regularly when determining mandate and policy focus priorities for the CWA. A copy of the joint resolution is available online at: https://www.glfc.org/pubs/pdfs/resol2024_4.pdf.

Dr. Tom Whillans of Trent University, who chairs the Canadian Committee of Advisors, said, “The strong support for these resolutions, which tackle various issues affecting how we manage the Great Lakes fishery, shows just how diverse and knowledgeable our committee members are. During our annual meeting, we discussed a wide range of topics, including science, policy, and education. Our committee is made up of passionate individuals who are dedicated to fostering collaboration, advancing scientific understanding, and shaping policies that are crucial for protecting and restoring the Great Lakes and their incredible fishery.”

Captain Denny Grinold, chair of the U.S. Committee of Advisors, added, “Everyone on the Committee of Advisors shares a common mission: to ensure the Great Lakes fishery remains healthy and sustainable for future generations. The Great Lakes have encountered numerous obstacles, and it's only through cooperation among experts in fisheries, science, politics, and regional matters that we can effectively address these issues. With a \$7 billion fishery at stake, we need to be objective, use science to inform policy, and work together.”

“The Great Lakes Fishery Commission truly appreciates the diligence and commitment of our Advisors. The recommendations in the resolutions help guide science and policy efforts and identify priority issues for the Commission,” said Ethan Baker, Chair of the Commission.