

---

**Name of Organization:** Great Lakes Commission

**Type of Organization:** Interstate Agency or Commission

**Contact Information:** Dr. Michael J. Donahue

The Argus II Bldg, 400 Fourth St.

Ann Arbor MI 48103

**Phone:** (734) 665 - 9135 **Extension:**

**Fax:** (734) 665 - 4370

**E-Mail:** mdonahue@glc.org

---

**Project Title:** Lake St. Clair Management Initiative

**Project Category:** Habitat (Ecological) Protection and Rest

**Rank by Organization (if applicable):** 1

**Total Funding Requested (\$):** 121,975 **Project Duration:** 2 Years

**Abstract:**

Lake St. Clair has been described by many as the "lost lake" in that it has historically lacked the research, monitoring and management attention afforded the five Great Lakes. This concern, articulated in a recent and exceptionally well-attended Lake St. Clair conference, suggests the need for a management initiative to elevate focus on Lake St. Clair and its integral role within the larger Great Lakes System. The Lake St. Clair Management Initiative will address this unmet need by establishing a binational structure for managing Lake St. Clair and a process for integrating the substantial array of local, state/provincial, tribal/First Nation and federal management efforts into a rational and collective framework. The Initiative will provide a means for synthesizing and interpreting sources and impacts of environmental stress; documenting and coordinating environmental protection and resource management efforts; identifying unmet needs; presenting information, education and outreach needs; prioritizing remedial actions; and establishing tasks, timelines and lead entities. The Initiative features a locally-driven, binational orientation that builds upon and strengthens existing activities, and will be pursued in the context of the U.S.-Canada Four Agency Letter of Commitment. Finally, the Initiative will encompass several project-specific activities that respond to immediate priorities for the lake, including habitat assessment; monitoring assessment and coordination; a "State of the Lake" conference; and mechanisms for communication and public outreach. These projects, and the larger Initiative, will be guided by a steering committee of core stakeholders and a larger advisory forum with broad-based representation from the binational Lake St. Clair community.

---

---

**Geographic Areas Affected by the Project**

**States:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Illinois	<input type="checkbox"/> New York
<input type="checkbox"/> Indiana	<input type="checkbox"/> Pennsylvania
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Michigan	<input type="checkbox"/> Wisconsin
<input type="checkbox"/> Minnesota	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ohio

**Lakes:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Superior	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Erie
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Huron	<input type="checkbox"/> Ontario
<input type="checkbox"/> Michigan	<input type="checkbox"/> All Lakes

**Geographic Initiatives:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Greater Chicago	<input type="checkbox"/> NE Ohio	<input type="checkbox"/> NW Indiana	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SE Michigan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lake St. Clair
--	----------------------------------	-------------------------------------	---	--

**Primary Affected Area of Concern:** Clinton River, MI

**Other Affected Areas of Concern:** St. Clair River  
Detroit River

---

***For Habitat Projects Only:***

**Primary Affected Biodiversity Investment Area:** Lake St. Clair/Detroit River

**Other Affected Biodiversity Investment Areas:**

---

**Problem Statement:**

The Lake St. Clair Management Initiative will address a pronounced unmet need in the binational management regime for the corridor linking lakes Huron and Erie. Currently, the Lake Huron Initiative and the Lake Erie Lakewide Management Plan (LaMP) processes are identifying environmental problems facing those lakes and coordinating management efforts and remediation activities. The St. Clair, Clinton and Detroit River Remedial Action Plans (RAP) are facilitating similar processes for the localized problems in those areas. Despite being located in the very middle of this international corridor, however, Lake St. Clair lacks a comprehensive, binational management structure and plan, and the attendant benefits of regional coordination, collaboration, communication, recognition and leveraging of resources. This gap has led to the perception that Lake St. Clair is the "lost lake."

Lake St. Clair is a vital shared resource between the United States and Canada that provides substantial ecological, recreational and commercial benefits to the binational community. The lake has been identified as a Biodiversity Investment Area and a priority "eco-reach" through the State of the Lakes Ecosystem Conference (SOLEC) process. From a recreational perspective, Lake St. Clair is among the most heavily utilized portions of the Great Lakes. The annual economic value of boating-related activities in the three U.S. counties along the lake is estimated to be more than \$260 million, and sport fishing on the lake accounts for nearly one-half of the entire Great Lakes sport fishing effort. Navigation channels in Lake St. Clair are a vital link in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence transportation system with an annual average of 3,000 vessel movements. Finally, Lake St. Clair is the source of drinking water for more than 4.5 million people in southeastern Michigan.

Lake St. Clair suffers from a broad range of adverse, human-related impacts. Suburban sprawl in the U.S. portion of the Lake St. Clair watershed has contributed to serious problems from nonpoint source pollution, combined sewer overflows and leaking septic systems. Shoreline modifications, agricultural activities and waterfront development have altered natural habitat and dramatically reduced the acreage of ecologically vital wetlands. Industrial discharges have contributed heavy metals, PCBs and other toxic pollutants to the lake and its sediments. Intensive agricultural activity in the Canadian portion of the watershed has led to elevated phosphorus levels and related impacts. Finally, nonindigenous aquatic nuisance species have dramatically altered the lake's aquatic ecosystem. Continued population growth and development along the shores of Lake St. Clair and within its watershed promise only greater use of, and demands from, the resource and a corresponding increase in the intensity of stresses and environmental impacts on the lake.

The recent U.S. EPA-sponsored conference, Lake St. Clair: Its Current State and Future Prospects, showcased the substantial binational interest and concern over environmental conditions in Lake St. Clair and the impact that pollution sources are having on the lake's varied beneficial uses. The conference also illustrated the impressive array of current "grassroots efforts" and the strong commitment to local leadership in restoring and protecting the lake's environmental quality. However, the conference also highlighted an immediate and pressing need to develop a framework within which these various activities – and future ones – can be pursued in an orderly, integrated and comprehensive manner. In brief, the consensus of the 230 plus attendees was to develop a Lake St. Clair management plan. The Lake St. Clair

---

Management Initiative will address the need for such a management plan by building on the success of the conference and the substantial momentum it generated. The initiative also will address several specific priorities that emerged from the conference in the areas of habitat, monitoring, and communications and public outreach.

**Proposed Work Outcome:**

The Great Lakes Commission will work with local leaders and relevant state, provincial, tribal/First Nation and federal officials in pursuing the Lake St. Clair Management Initiative. Within the context of the Four Party Agreement, the Initiative will have a locally-driven, binational orientation that builds upon and strengthens existing activities. A concerted "bias for action" will ensure that bureaucracy is minimized while focus is placed on accomplishments and unmet needs. The Initiative will learn from the successes and failures of the RAP and LaMP processes as well as the Lake Huron Initiative, without being constrained by the procedures associated with those efforts. Rather, the Lake St. Clair Management Initiative will be uniquely suited to the watershed and its resources, uses and people. The following is an outline of work to be conducted under the Lake St. Clair Management Initiative:

A) **Project Scoping and Organization:** A project steering committee will be assembled, comprised of a core group of agency representatives and local stakeholders with a leadership role in Lake St. Clair management efforts. This committee will be responsible for detailed project design and oversight of primary products: habitat and monitoring assessments; public outreach and communication efforts; the "State of the Lake" conference; and the management plan framework. Workgroups will be formed, as needed, to advise on specific topical areas (e.g., habitat and monitoring). An important initial function of this group will be to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the RAP and LaMP programs, the Lake Huron Initiative, and related management efforts, and structure the scope, mission and activities of the Lake St. Clair Management Initiative accordingly. This group will also ensure proper linkages to the U.S.-Canada Four Agency Letter of Commitment and other binational agreements.

B) **Advisory Forum:** With the advice and guidance of the steering committee, project staff will establish a larger advisory forum that will participate in the Lake St. Clair Management Initiative via facilitated group process. Members will include relevant U.S. and Canadian public agencies at all levels, as well as private sector and citizen stakeholder interests. The forum will also provide a mechanism for regular interaction and information sharing among all involved parties – a function presently lacking in the Lake St. Clair watershed. It will also provide a vehicle for public information and outreach.

C) **Habitat and Monitoring Assessment:** For each of these efforts, a technical workgroup will be formed to provide project staff with detailed guidance and access to data and related resources from relevant agencies. Specific study goals and methodology will be developed and reviewed with the steering committee and subsequently presented to the larger advisory forum. It is anticipated that a one-day workshop will be conducted for each topic to present findings and draft recommendations to the advisory forum and other interested parties. Additional work efforts include the following:

**Habitat assessment:** The overall goal of this effort is to assess habitat restoration and protection efforts and priorities in the Lake St. Clair watershed, and develop detailed recommendations for preserving critical remaining habitat and protecting and enhancing regional biodiversity. Specific objectives (e.g., online biodiversity atlas) will be identified in consultation with the steering committee and advisory forum. Linkages will be established to related activities and research efforts.

**Monitoring assessment and coordination:** U.S. and Canadian monitoring programs related to Lake St. Clair will be documented and assessed in conjunction with relevant state/provincial, tribal/First Nation and federal agency staff. An action plan will be developed for coordinating and enhancing the collective monitoring regime, addressing gaps, and correlating monitoring with critical management goals. (The Commission is managing a similar effort for the Lake Michigan Lakewide Management Plan.)

D) **Management Plan Development:** Working closely with the steering committee and the larger advisory forum, project staff will develop a framework for a management plan for Lake St. Clair. The framework will draw from existing research and management efforts and will focus on coordinating the collective effort, responding to unmet needs, and addressing ecological restoration and protection priorities in the lake and its watershed. Subcommittees may be formed to address specific plan elements.

E) **"State of the Lake" Conference:** Using the 1999 conference as a model, project staff will coordinate the design and conduct of a major "State of the Lake" conference to review progress on Lake St. Clair, update shared knowledge, reassess needs, and receive feedback on a draft management plan framework.

F) **Communication and Public Outreach:** The Commission will develop a website on the Great Lakes Information Network dedicated solely to Lake St. Clair, with links to stakeholders, informational resources, and summaries of the major issues impacting the lake. The Commission will also pursue other outreach mechanisms, such as a newsletter, email list server, etc.

G) **Follow Up Activities:** Project staff at the Great Lakes Commission will finalize the management plan framework and assist the advisory forum and other parties in ongoing plan development and implementation. The advisory forum will also assist in leveraging funding for project-specific activities addressing discrete priorities. The Commission will also seek

---

additional funding to maintain the Lake St. Clair Management Initiative, which will be a multi-year activity.

The Lake St. Clair Management Initiative is timely and important for several reasons. It will build upon and showcase important local efforts, including those of the Macomb County Water Quality Board, St. Clair County's Blue Water Task Force on Water Quality, the St. Clair, Clinton and Detroit River RAPs, and numerous other watershed planning activities. Further, it will help state, local and other entities better position themselves to secure substantial resources for management plan implementation, whether they be through the Clean Michigan Initiative, U.S. EPA, Water Resources Development Act of 1999 appropriations, or any of a number of prospective sources. Finally, the Initiative will respond to the groundswell of local interest in special attention to environmental problems in the Lake St. Clair watershed.

The Lake St. Clair Management Initiative responds directly to criteria and guidelines listed in the Ecological (Habitat) and Protection and Restoration section of the Great Lakes Priorities and Funding Guidance document. The initiative will emphasize the Lake St. Clair ecosystem as a whole and will formulate a regional response to the lake's resource management needs. The effort will be linked with relevant LaMP and RAP efforts and will provide a mechanism to leverage resources for implementation actions consistent with these processes. The initiative is, by definition, a partnership-oriented endeavor that will incorporate the participation and support of all relevant parties. The Walpole Island First Nation, in particular, will be instrumental in protecting and enhancing the vital habitat and biodiversity resources on its lands. Finally, the project's strong education/outreach component will elevate the profile of the collective Lake St. Clair management effort and showcase the value and outcome of existing and future environmental protection activities.

Lake St. Clair and its watershed support significant biodiversity and are biologically important on a regional, national and binational scale. The lake has been identified as a Biodiversity Investment Area and a priority coastal reach through the SOLEC process. The Lake St. Clair Management Initiative is consistent with the recommendations from the associated SOLEC background papers. For example, the 1998 Coastal Wetland Ecosystems paper recommended that each Great Lake and connecting channel "be evaluated on their own for conservation and biodiversity investment purposes." The 1996 Land by the Lakes paper recommended a "concerted international effort" and "coordinated shoreline management measures" to protect high-value coastal areas that "involve all levels of government and other stakeholders...and secure broad support from Great Lakes citizens." The 1998 paper, Nearshore Terrestrial Ecosystems, stated that protecting the Lake St. Clair delta "must be a priority." The paper also highlighted an important role for the Walpole Island First Nation and recommended that "efforts should be expanded throughout this region to work with state and local governments and landowners to restore natural processes, promote sustainable development, and support ecotourism."

This initiative is also consistent with recommendations from the Nature Conservancy's 1994 report *The Conservation of Biological Diversity in the Great Lakes: Issues and Opportunities*. The primary stresses on biological diversity identified in the paper—habitat destruction, development, agriculture, alteration of physical processes and exotic species—are endemic to Lake St. Clair and its watershed. The Lake St. Clair Management Initiative will directly support the report's major recommendations, including development of "strategically coordinated, locally-based projects that collectively address the most significant systems and stresses"; "increasing awareness of the basin's biological diversity and methods to conserve that diversity"; and "increasing the support of regional institutions, both governmental and private, for the protection of biological diversity."

The project will enhance, build on and leverage resources for existing initiatives while addressing gaps and unmet needs for the Lake St. Clair ecosystem as a whole. As such, the project is directly relevant to, and will address priorities in other target areas, particularly pollution prevention and reduction, contaminated sediments, and exotic species.

With completion of detailed position papers for the U.S.-Canada Four Agency Letter of Commitment, a unique opportunity exists to incorporate Lake St. Clair into this process and facilitate a holistic approach to the international corridor stretching between Lake Huron and Lake Erie. Bringing Lake St. Clair under the umbrella of the Four Agency Agreement will address an important unmet need in the binational management structure without having to create new institutional arrangements. Moreover, by showcasing associated management activities, the Lake St. Clair Management Initiative will bolster and elevate the profile of the agreement and the broader U.S. and Canadian commitment to Lake St. Clair.

---

<b>Project Milestones:</b>	<b>Dates:</b>
Project Start	10/2000
Project Scoping and Organization	11/2000
Advisory Forum	12/2000
Habitat and Monitoring Assessment	04/2001
"State of the Lake" Conference	05/2001
Management Plan Development	07/2002
Follow-up Activities	08/2002
Project End	09/2002

---

Project Addresses Environmental Justice

**If So, Description of How:**

This project will directly contribute to improvements in environmental quality throughout the Lake St. Clair watershed and, ultimately, the Detroit River corridor. Sectors of the population, including tribal residents and urban populations historically underserved and disproportionately affected by environmental problems, will be represented on the project advisory committee, and associated issues will be addressed in all project elements.

Project Addresses Education/Outreach

**If So, Description of How:**

The Lake St. Clair Management Initiative will have a strong and ongoing public information/outreach component. As a collaborative effort of the various entities with management responsibility for the lake, the project will, by definition, involve substantial outreach to a wide array of agencies, tribal authorities/First Nations, environmental organizations, user groups, business and industry, and other entities. These groups, as well as the general public, will benefit from meetings of the advisory forum, publications (both electronic and hard copy), and the final "State of the Lake" conference. Information available via the Great Lakes Information Network will be substantially enhanced and other communication mechanisms will be developed (e.g., newsletter, email list serve, etc.). Finally, the habitat and monitoring assessments will provide important educational opportunities for involved stakeholders and the public.

---

---

**Project Budget:**

	<b>Federal Share Requested (\$)</b>	<b>Applicant's Share (\$)</b>
<b>Personnel:</b>	40,000	3,571
<b>Fringe:</b>	14,000	1,250
<b>Travel:</b>	2,500	0
<b>Equipment:</b>	0	0
<b>Supplies:</b>	7,500	0
<b>Contracts:</b>	2,000	0
<b>Construction:</b>	0	0
<b>Other:</b>	25,000	0
<b>Total Direct Costs:</b>	91,000	4,821
<b>Indirect Costs:</b>	30,975	1,687
<b>Total:</b>	121,975	6,508
<b>Projected Income:</b>	0	0

---

**Funding by Other Organizations (Names, Amounts, Description of Commitments):**

No other funding for the proposed work has been secured from any other source. The Great Lakes Commission, however, will pursue opportunities to complement prospective GLNPO support with funds from other entities, given the large scale, multi-year nature of the project.

---

**Description of Collaboration/Community Based Support:**

---

The Lake St. Clair Management Initiative will involve collaboration with the full array of entities involved in managing Lake St. Clair or with an interest the lake's overall well being. The list of prospective collaborators is lengthy; it is perhaps best represented by the sponsors of the 1999 conference Lake St. Clair: Its Current State and Future Prospects. However, to ensure consistency with established agency programs and authorities, and coordination with binational arrangements such as the Four Agency Letter of Commitment, the project steering committee will be comprised of a core group of agency representatives and local stakeholders with a leadership role in Lake St. Clair management efforts.