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Great Lakes Fishery Commission Praises Initiative to Restore Great Lakes

ANN ARBOR, MI—The Great Lakes Fishery Commission today praised the introduction of the Great Lakes Collaboration Implementation Act. This bipartisan bill would implement many of the recommendations developed by the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration, pursuant to President Bush's Executive Order to develop a plan to restore the Great Lakes. The bill, sponsored by Senators Mike DeWine (OH) and Carl Levin (MI), and Representatives Vern Ehlers (MI) and Rahm Emanuel (IL), addresses the environmental issues facing the region including invasive species, a healthy fishery, safe beaches, clean drinking water, and sustainable development. The bill would authorize funding for the initiatives laid out by the basin-wide collaboration. The commission is particularly pleased that this bill incorporates most of the recommendations of the Aquatic Invasive Species Strategy Team, a team co-chaired by the commission.

"This initiative is crucial for the health of the Great Lakes," said commission Chair Gerry Barnhart, Director of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources for New York State. "We thank the sponsors for introducing this historic legislation and applaud the strong bipartisan support for it. We also appreciate the extent to which the proposed Great Lakes Collaboration Implementation Act addresses key components of the Aquatic Invasive Species Team's action plan. The issue of invasive species, highlighted by the commission's long-term efforts to manage exotic sea lampreys and, more recently, by the imminent threat posed by Asian Carp knocking on the door to our lakes, is the single greatest threat to the future of Great Lakes fisheries and the multi-billion dollar economy they support."

The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration, created by President Bush's Executive Order, identified the Great Lakes as a "national treasure" and created the federal Great Lakes Interagency Task Force to improve federal coordination to restore and protect the Great Lakes. The collaboration brought together more than 1,500 people representing federal, state, local and tribal governments; nongovernmental entities; and private citizens to develop an action plan to restore the Great Lakes. Throughout 2005, this wide-ranging collaboration developed a comprehensive strategy to restore, protect and use sustainably, the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes Collaboration Implementation Act will put into action many of the recommendations of the collaboration.

The Great Lakes Fishery Commission is an international organization established by the United States and Canada through the 1954 Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries. The commission has the responsibility to coordinate fisheries research, control sea lampreys, and facilitate implementation of the Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Great Lakes Fisheries. For more information about the commission and its programs, visit www.glfsc.org on the Internet.