

The Great Lakes Compact

Protection for New York's Precious Water Resources



New York State depends on Great Lakes water.

The Great Lakes represent the largest source of available freshwater in the world and account for almost 95 percent of the surface freshwater in the continental U.S.

The health of lakes Erie and Ontario, and the waterways within the Basin, is essential to New York's economic and cultural identity. The Great Lakes provide us with multimillion dollar fishing and tourism industries, clean, emissions-free hydropower from Niagara Falls and the St. Lawrence Seaway, drinking water for millions, and homes for countless species of wildlife.

With approximately 3.4 million residents, one-third of New York State is within the Great Lakes Basin, the 308,000-square-mile area surrounding the lakes.¹ Lakes Erie and Ontario alone provide drinking water to millions of New York residents.

New York needs the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact to protect the lakes today and for future generations.

"The Compact presents an unprecedented opportunity for regional control of this precious freshwater resource, which is central to the environment and economy of the region."

New York State Chemical Alliance



Safeguarding our Future: The Great Lakes Compact



Protecting the Great Lakes: Our Right, Our Legacy

The Great Lakes Compact protects the lakes from wasteful withdrawals.

To address the regional need for a voice in Great Lakes management, the eight Great Lakes governors, together with their Canadian counterparts, signed an amendment to the Great Lakes Charter, the 20-year-old agreement that oversees shipping and pollution issues in the Basin.

Protecting the Great Lakes for Future Generations

The Compact is just one piece of a broad effort to restore the health of the lakes. National efforts are underway to put into practice priority recommendations of a multibillion dollar Great Lakes clean-up strategy. Comprehensive Great Lakes restoration legislation has been introduced in both the U.S. House and Senate with strong bipartisan support from New York's Congressional delegation. And new funding categories within New York's Environmental Protection Fund will help the state begin to meet many of the goals identified in the strategy and leverage additional funds provided through the federal measure.



Photo courtesy of WIDN

The amendment, called the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact, or the "Compact," must be adopted by all eight surrounding states, and ratified by the U.S. Congress. The Compact includes a number of important water-use protections, such as requirements for withdrawal and diversion projects. Once ratified, the Compact will give New York a voice in managing water withdrawals throughout the Basin.

Our Right, Our Legacy

In the next century, many predict that freshwater will become our most valuable resource. And though the Great Lakes may seem like an infinite source of drinking water, they are only replenished through rain and snowmelt at the rate of about one percent per year.

It is New York's right to have an active voice in the preservation and management of the lakes. As the state at the bottom of the watershed, we are heavily impacted by management decisions made upstream. Withdrawals or exports outside of the Basin lessen our ability to provide our families with high quality freshwater.

Changes in Great Lakes water levels or quality will hurt New York's economy and quality of life.

However, the Great Lakes states and provinces, not to mention the Canadian and U.S. governments, currently have little control over the waters in the lakes, particularly now that international agreements prevent these local agencies from regulating commercial schemes that leave the lakes vulnerable to abuse.

For more information on the Compact:

Environmental Advocates of New York
www.eany.org

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
www.dec.state.ny.us/website/greatlakes

Council of Great Lakes Governors
www.cglg.org/projects/water

For more information on restoration efforts:

Healing Our Waters Coalition
www.healingourwaters.org

Healthy Lakes, Healthy Lives
www.healthylakes.org

Great Lakes Commission
www.glc.org

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