



Great Lakes Basin

Quick Facts

- 17 threatened and endangered species and 18 non-game migratory bird species of management concern occur
- 130 globally endangered or rare plant and animal species inhabit the basin
- 162 species of invasive plants and animals occur in the basin
- Water-related, outdoor recreational activities in the Great Lakes Basin are valued at \$15 billion annually. Sport fishing alone contributes more than \$4 billion.
- Four fish species are extinct

Management Needs:

- Implement the 2002 Great Lakes Strategy to restore biological, chemical, and physical integrity (<http://www.epa.gov/grtlakes/gls/glstoc.html>).

Current Status

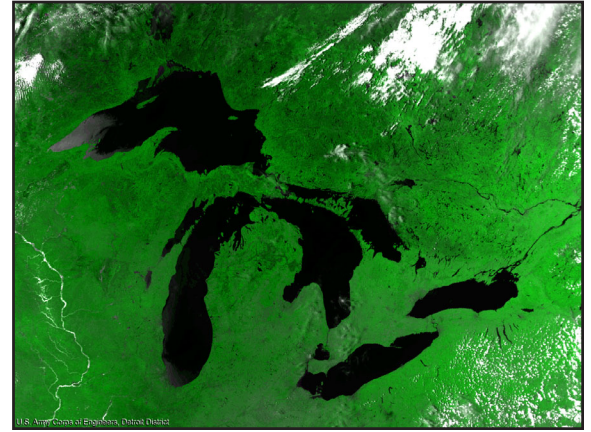
The Great Lakes Basin is the largest freshwater body in the world. It holds 18 percent of the world's supply of fresh water; covers 95,000 square miles, with 9,000 miles of shoreline; includes 5,000 tributaries; contains more than 30,000 large and small islands; and has a drainage area of 288,000 square miles. More than 35 million people live in the basin and depend on its natural resources.

More than 100 native fish species use Great Lakes coastal wetlands as spawning, nursery, feeding and wintering habitat. However, more than two thirds of the natural Great Lakes wetlands have been filled or drained for agriculture, urban use, shoreline development, recreation and resource extraction.

Invasive species adversely affect both the economy and ecology of the entire Great Lakes Basin. More than 160 non-native species are established in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway system. Once in the Great Lakes, these invaders can spread to nearby inland lakes and distant ecosystems, including the Mississippi River watershed.

Due in part to the long retention time of water in the system (up to 190 years in Lake Superior), the Great Lakes are also greatly affected by toxic substances. Those that are persistent and bioaccumulate are the greatest threat. Current fish consumption advisories in the Great Lakes indicate that toxic substances are still accumulating in the food chain at unacceptable levels. In addition, new research is identifying potential problems with the possible endocrine-disrupting nature of some chemicals.

The Service's goals for addressing management challenges in the Great



Hot Topics:

New Executive Order - Establishment of Great Lakes Interagency Task Force and promotion of a regional collaboration of national significance for the Great Lakes

House and Senate Hearings on Great Lakes

Control Invasive Species - Asian carp barrier being studied

Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway System Study

Environmental Contaminants

Lakes focus on restoring and maintaining stable, diverse and self-sustaining populations of predominantly native fish and other aquatic life, wildlife and plants in the Great Lakes Basin. Management efforts are combined with research that we hope will provide vital information on a range of issues including controlling and preventing introduction of invasive species, reducing toxins in the basin and identifying habitat requirements that limit abundance of native species.



- National Wildlife Refuge
- ⊕ Ecological Services
- Fisheries Resource Office
- National Fish Hatchery
- | Sea Lamprey Control
- ★ Law Enforcement
- ▲ Private Land Office
- ⊙ Wetland Management District HQ