



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act of 1998

Region 3 - Great Lakes/Big Rivers

Leadership in Conserving, Enhancing, and Restoring Aquatic Ecosystems



-USFWS

The Act provides essential resources to state and tribal management agencies to conserve, enhance, and restore Great Lakes fish and wildlife populations and their habitats.



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Native fish species such as the coaster brook trout in Lake Superior have benefited from rehabilitation efforts under the Act.



-photo by D. Jackson

The Act has supported fish population and community dynamics research in areas such as the near-shore habitats of Lake Erie.

Background

The Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act of 1998 provides critical support for the Fish and Wildlife Service's operations in the Great Lakes and financial assistance for State and Tribal management agencies to carry out their Great Lakes programs.

It also provides interagency Great Lakes fish and wildlife management priorities and establishes an interagency committee under the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's Council of Lake Committees to coordinate State and Tribal fish and wildlife projects.

The Act authorizes \$4.5 million annually for State and Tribal grants during FY 1999-2004; \$500,000 was appropriated by Congress in FY 2003. Since 1998, 120 proposals requesting \$10 million have been submitted by States and Tribes to the Fish and Wildlife Restoration Grant Program. To date 49 of these restoration projects have been funded for a total of \$2,247,000. These projects focus on rehabilitation of fishery resources and aquatic habitat and will benefit Great Lakes fisheries targeting lake trout, walleye, yellow perch, brook trout, lake sturgeon and other species.

The Act also authorizes \$3.5 million for the Service to provide interagency coordination of the grant program and other activities and technical assistance through the Upper and Lower Great Lakes Fishery Resource Offices during FY 1999-2004; \$1.278 million was appropriated by Congress for Service operations in FY 2003.

Progress Toward Restoration and Management Needs

Guided by 32 recommendations identified in the 1995 Great Lakes Fishery Resources Restoration Study, Act programs are helping to fill gaps in the complicated management structure within the Great Lakes. The Act has helped provide resources for states and tribes to produce the science necessary to approach restoration needs more effectively and at a scale that would not be possible for each individual authority.

From 1998-2002, the Service implemented fish and wildlife restoration projects to address 20 of the 32 Study recommendations in collaboration with 52 partner organizations who brought funding, in-kind contributions and expertise.



-USFWS

Basic information on fish and wildlife habitats and conditions impeding habitat restoration has been collected through Act programs.



-Council of Lake Committees

The Act has strengthened interagency partnerships and improved coordination of management activities in the Great Lakes.



-photo by Marc Gaden

Tools for addressing conservation challenges are provided through the Act for the benefit of Great Lakes fish, wildlife, and habitat resources, and the people who depend on them.

Much of the work completed during this period focused on basic research on the status of fish and wildlife populations and their habitat, on the conditions impeding restoration, and on establishing a framework, including geographic information systems and interagency databases, to help bring management authorities together as a combined force. This has been an important contribution in the ongoing process of establishing an adaptive, science-based approach in restoring Great Lakes resources.

Building Partnerships

The Act has been extremely successful in building partnerships among state, tribal, federal and provincial management agencies for cooperative conservation, enhancement and restoration of Great Lakes fish and wildlife resources and their habitat.

It has fueled existing resource management partnerships coordinated through the Great Lakes Fishery Commission under the Joint Strategic Plan and opened up new possibilities for international coordination, such as the potential to combine activities under the Fish and Wildlife Restoration Proposal program with those funded under the Canada-Ontario Agreement.

These interagency partnerships continue to grow and become more effective each year as additional stakeholders join in Act programs.

Looking to the Future

Increasing stress on the Great Lakes ecosystem from climate change, population growth, demand for water, pollution and contamination, habitat alteration and destruction, fish and wildlife diseases, and invading species will result in increasing conservation challenges.

The Act provides powerful and effective tools for agencies and organizations to address these challenges together and help resolve the fish and wildlife conservation side of environmental restoration programs in the Great Lakes region.

Continuing investment in the Act as an interagency strategy will yield direct benefits to Great Lakes fish and wildlife resources and their habitats and the to the 34 million people living within this unique region.