

# Wisconsin Water

*Our way of life*

## The Building Blocks of Great Lakes Legislation:

**2004**

### Draft Annex Implementing Agreements (Great Lakes Agreement)

a more detailed agreement including issues of water consumption and diversion.

**2001**

### Great Lakes Annex 2001

an amendment to the 1985 charter.

**1985**

### Great Lakes Charter Annex

management agreement signed by the United States' Great Lakes Governors (8) and Canadian Premiers (2) governing how Great Lakes water is to be used.



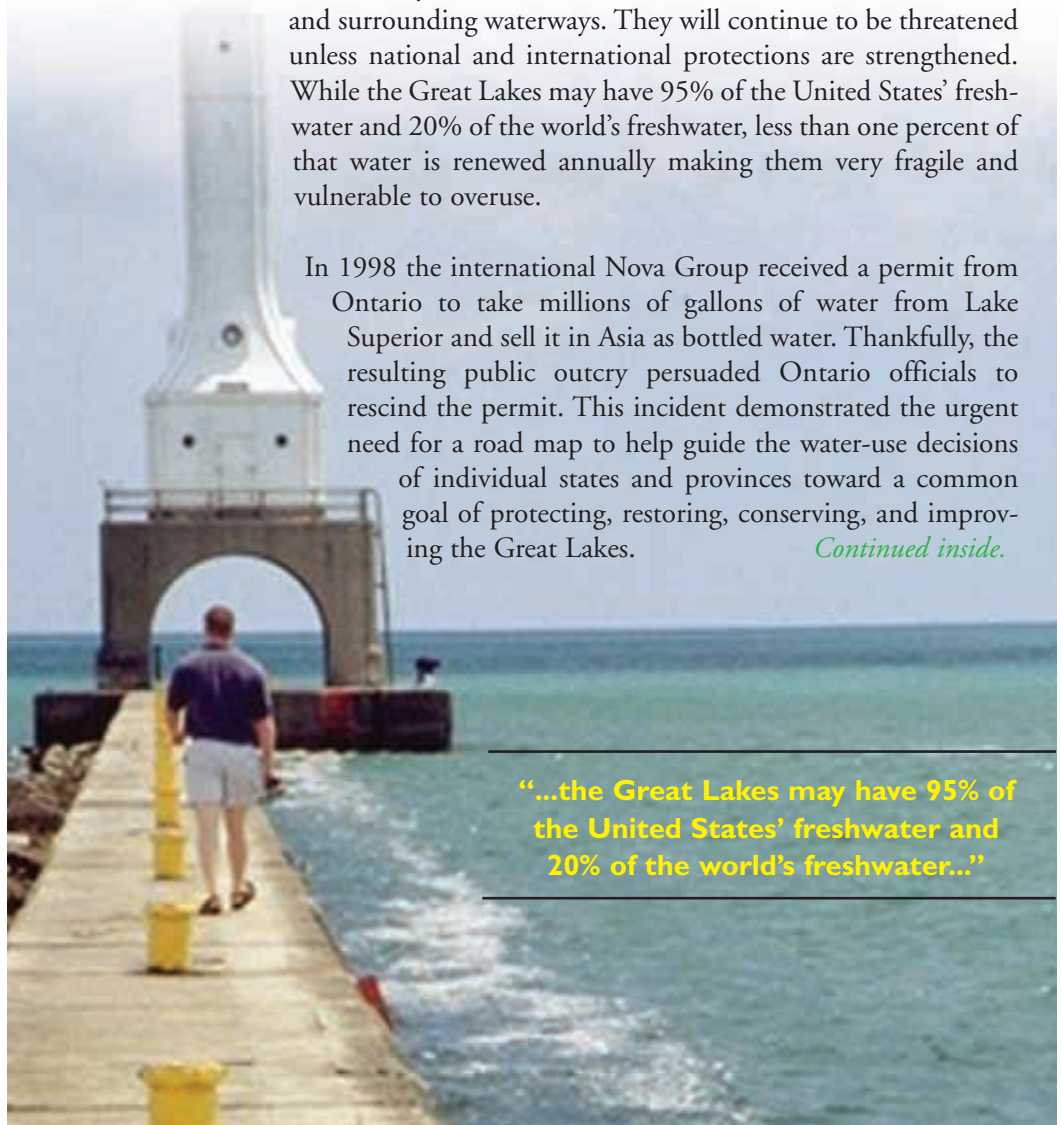
Photo credit, Wisconsin Dept. of Tourism

## Will decisions be made about Great Lakes water with or without you?

The Great Lakes are one of the natural wonders of the world and define the region in which we live. We paddle on them, fish in them and hike around them. We marvel in their beauty and remain in awe of their power. They are the backbone to the region's economy and a draw for tourists worldwide. And they are threatened.

Overuse and excessive withdrawals within the watershed and a water-thirsty world outside the basin threaten the Great Lakes and surrounding waterways. They will continue to be threatened unless national and international protections are strengthened. While the Great Lakes may have 95% of the United States' freshwater and 20% of the world's freshwater, less than one percent of that water is renewed annually making them very fragile and vulnerable to overuse.

In 1998 the international Nova Group received a permit from Ontario to take millions of gallons of water from Lake Superior and sell it in Asia as bottled water. Thankfully, the resulting public outcry persuaded Ontario officials to rescind the permit. This incident demonstrated the urgent need for a road map to help guide the water-use decisions of individual states and provinces toward a common goal of protecting, restoring, conserving, and improving the Great Lakes. *Continued inside.*



**"...the Great Lakes may have 95% of the United States' freshwater and 20% of the world's freshwater..."**

Photo by: Donald S. Abrams, Wisconsin Dept. of Tourism

## Will decisions be made about Great Lakes water with or without you?

Since then the Council of Great Lakes Governors and Canadian Premiers, with input from environmental, municipal, industrial and agricultural groups, has written and released a draft Great Lakes Agreement which would do many things to protect the Great Lakes. Among these:



*Photo credit: Wisconsin Dept. of Tourism*

- \* **Promote conservation.** The global per capita average water use level is 1/4 that of the average American and residents of the Great Lakes region use more water than the average American. The Agreement could require mandatory conservation efforts.
- \* **Improve the ecosystem.** As a part of the permitting process under the proposed Agreement, many water users would have to agree to some sort of resource improvement.
- \* **Regulate new or increased withdrawals and diversions.** Those who wish to use large amounts of Great Lakes water would face a regional review body. This body would review the project and approve or deny a water use permit. Under some instances approval would have to be unanimous.
- \* **Create a legally binding Compact Agreement** regarding Great Lakes water among the eight bordering states.

As part of the Agreement's approval process, there was a 90-day comment period in 2004 where over 10,000 comments were received by the Council of Great Lakes Governors, including over 5,000 from Wisconsin. These comments came from concerned citizens, elected officials, environmental groups like Clean Wisconsin, manufacturing groups, First Nation tribes and various farm bureaus and others. As one would expect given the quantity of opinions and the diversity of sources there were widely disparate comments. While just about everyone expressed the opinion that the Great Lakes need to be protected the similarities ended there.

### There are several issues that divide the comments:

1. Should conservation requirements be mandatory or voluntary?
2. Should an improvement requirement exist for all, some or none of the water?
3. How should average water use be determined given the seasonality of much of the demand.  
For example, should a farm that uses 12 million gallons a day for 3 months of the year face the same restrictions as a power plant that uses 3 million gallons every day throughout the year?
4. What should the water use threshold be that requires regional review of requested permits?  
A higher threshold would mean less regional control over water use while a lower threshold would put more projects under review.
5. Many other issues will have to be reconciled as well before an Agreement could be approved.

What lies ahead in the Agreement process? The Council of Great Lakes Governors must now take the comments and revise the Agreement. The revision will most likely go through another comment period. It must then pass through the state legislatures and the United States Congress must finally ratify it before it becomes law. It is expected that state legislators could begin debate over the Agreement as early as fall 2005.

**Wisconsin water is our way of life.  
Working together we will make a difference.**

# NOW is the time to act!

If you believe that the Great Lakes are threatened by proposed diversions outside the region and by excessive water use in the region, NOW is the time to act. State legislators and governors will begin to consider the proposed Agreement this year and need to hear from you! To find your legislators and their contact information, visit **Who Are My Legislators** at <http://165.189.139.210/WAML/> and simply type in your zip code.

*There are many things you can ask of your elected official regarding the Great Lakes Agreement but here are three key points we urge you to discuss:*

## ***1. There must be conservation with measurements and standards.***

It is not enough to simply require conservation steps to be taken or, worse yet, allow conservation to be voluntary. Measurements must be taken to better understand how effective various conservation steps are. There must also be standards that various types of water users (municipalities, farmers, power companies, etc.) must adhere to with regard to the kinds of conservation steps to be taken and what kinds of technologies to be used.

## ***2. There must be a no-harm standard required for return flow of water to the basin.***

It is not enough to simply return water to the lake basin from which it was taken. Since water removal will cause the most extensive ecological damage at the point of removal, water should be returned as near as possible to where it was removed. It must also be returned in the same quality and at the same temperature. Returning water that is 15°F warmer than when it is removed, which is what some power plants do, will harm the local ecosystem. So, too, will returning water that is loaded with pollutants or invasive species.

## ***3. There must be an improvement standard for all new or increased withdrawals.***

Improvement requirements should not be limited to diversions and the largest withdrawals. All those who wish to withdraw or divert Great Lakes water should be required to improve the resource by cleaning up shorelines, building wetlands, establishing trust funds for future environmental efforts etc.

## Where do we go from here?

According to the DNR, the predicted 2005-2006 timeline for the Great Lakes Agreement is as follows:

- **March 9-11, 2005:** Working Group meeting in Chicago to finalize revisions to the Agreement.
- **Spring:** A second public comment period to allow for comments on the revised draft.
- **July 2005:** Finalizing the proposed Agreement based on second round of comments
- **Fall 2005:** States' governors and legislators begin to debate the Agreement
- **Fall 2005 / 2006:** United States Congress debate and review the Agreement for potential ratification into law.

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[www.cleanwisconsin.org](http://www.cleanwisconsin.org)

# Join our E-mail Action Network to get the latest on the Great Lakes.



*Photo by: Robert Queen, Wisconsin Dept. of Tourism*

Clean Wisconsin will continue to be the main environmental group in Wisconsin working on the Great Lakes Agreement. To stay up-to-date on this issue, sign up for **Clean Wisconsin's Email Action Network** and we'll keep you posted on easy ways to make your voice heard.

Simply email Becky at [beweber@cleanwisconsin.org](mailto:beweber@cleanwisconsin.org) and ask to be included on the Action Network.

## *About Clean Wisconsin*

Clean Wisconsin, an environmental advocacy organization, protects Wisconsin's clean water and air and advocates for clean energy by being an effective voice in the state legislature and by holding elected officials and corporations accountable.

Founded in 1970 as Wisconsin's Environmental Decade, Clean Wisconsin exposes corporate polluters, makes sure existing environmental laws are enforced, and educates citizens and businesses. On behalf of its 10,000 members and its coalition partners, Clean Wisconsin protects the special places that make Wisconsin such a wonderful place to live, work and play.

## *Become a Member Today*

As we look back at our record of success and to the future, we know that we are here because of people like YOU - people who care deeply about the future of Wisconsin. Clean Wisconsin invites you to join our organization, for an annual membership of \$30, and become part of the voice that speaks on behalf of Wisconsin's special places that we all use and enjoy. You make our voice heard and our success possible. As a member of Clean Wisconsin, you will receive our quarterly newsletter, *The Defender*, as well as timely mailings and alerts on topics impacting Wisconsin's air and water resources. We hope you will also join us for local gatherings and other events.



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