

# PROTECTING THE GREAT LAKES: A Shared Responsibility



Photo: Corbis Eyeline, Corbis



# The Great Lakes are a vast resource...

20 % of world's fresh surface water



Photo: Courtesy of NASA



## ...but a precious and limited resource

- A one-time “gift of the glaciers”
- Only **one percent** of the Great Lakes are recharged annually
- The other 99% is finite and nonrenewable



Photo: Courtesy of the National Wildlife Federation





# Great Lakes: Valuable Resources

Liquid gold has gone from black to blue.

- 10,210 miles of shoreline
- 350+ species of fish and 3,500 species of plants and animals
- \$3 billion shipping industry
- \$4 billion sport and commercial fishing
- Billions of dollars in tourism



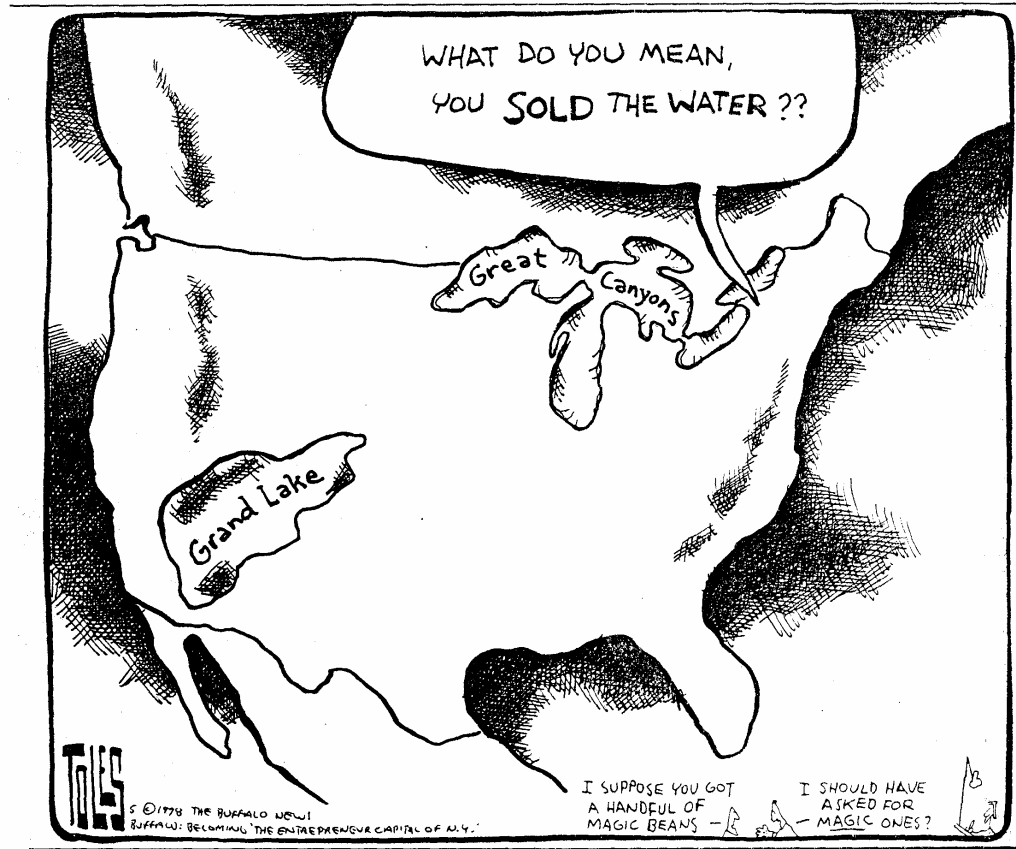
# The Great Lakes Basin



# Threats to the waters of the Great Lakes

- Diversions and exports outside the basin
- Local shortages within the basin
- Climate Change

May 13, 1998





# Growing International Threats



"Chinese walk on the dry river bed of the Jialing River. Droughts have left some areas of China facing shortages of drinking water."

-Newsweek, April 16, 2007



# Aral Sea Tragedy

Surface area shrunk by 60%, volume shrunk by 80%

Ecological damage due to **diversion** for irrigation



July - September, 1989



August 12, 2003





# Growing National Threats



- Nevada: Lake Mead only half full
- Utah/Arizona: Lake Powell only half full
- Florida: Lake Okeechobee set a record low this summer
- California: Canal proposal to reroute water supplies
- Kentucky: 61 counties on “Water Shortage Watch”
- Idaho: Poised to shut down hundreds of groundwater users



# Local shortages around the Great Lakes

## Lower Fox River Watershed, WI

Growth in cities such as Green Bay are raising concerns about future water supplies

## Saginaw Bay, MI

Large-scale irrigation is adversely affecting homeowner wells

## Rochester, NY

Expanding water infrastructure is raising concern on future water supplies due to urban growth and drought

## Chicago, IL

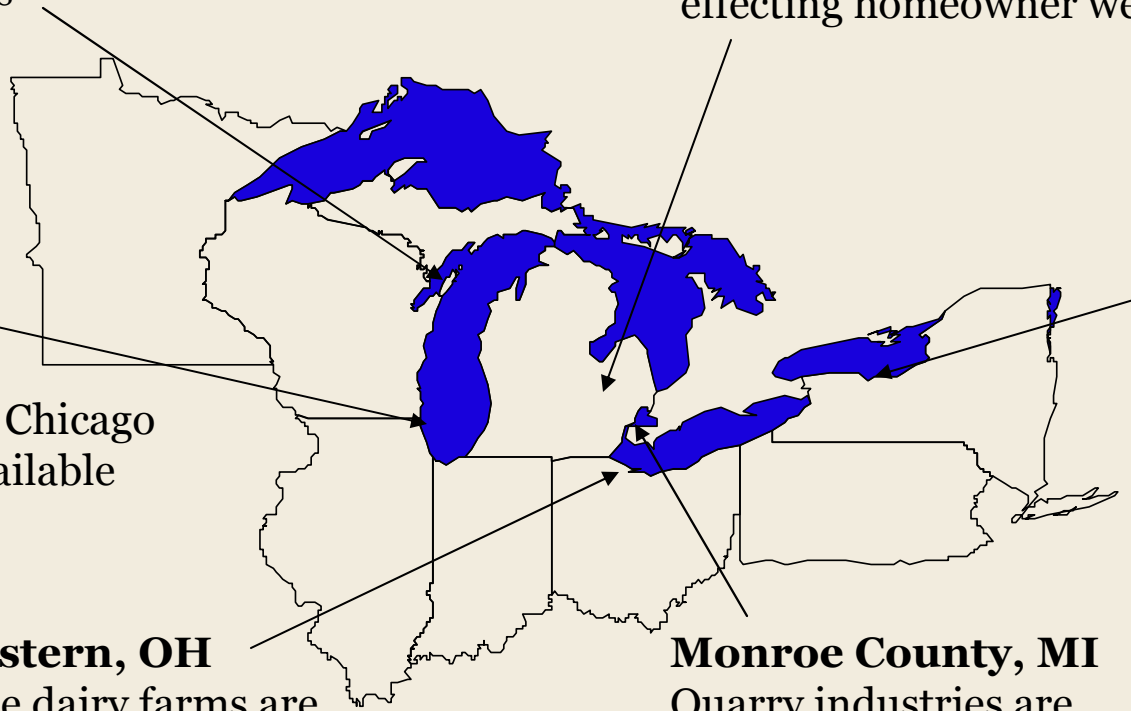
Suburban growth around the city of Chicago is outstripping available water supplies

## Northwestern, OH

Large-scale dairy farms are impacting nearby homeowner wells.

## Monroe County, MI

Quarry industries are affecting water availability in homeowner wells



# Consequences of Low Lake Levels

## (from the Summer of 2007)

- Ferry cancellations
- Extending docks to protect the bottoms of personal boats
- Forced dredging
- Freighters forced to carry lighter loads
- Reduced habitat for young walleye, perch and pike...less growing room and hiding spaces
- Ducks walking instead of swimming because in deep water they can't see what's under them
- Low lake levels provide perfect conditions for the spread of invasives like purple loosestrife
- Increased maintenance due to blowing sand from expanded beaches
- Some power plants operating at half capacity or less
- Loss of wild rice beds





# What's at Stake?

- Maintaining regional control of Great Lakes water resources.
- Ensuring water is available for future use and economic growth.



Photo: Courtesy of the National Wildlife Federation



# Current Protections are Weak

Question:

Currently, what legal protections are in place to prevent these other states and countries from taking our water?

Answer:

Not enough.



Photo: iStock by Getty Images



# Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact

## *Goals*

- Retain authority over water management in the Great Lakes region
- Work together to ensure the shared Great Lakes resource is available for future use
- State commitment to management programs, conservation, and efficiency
- Collect better information to improve scientific understanding



Photo credit: Evelyn K. Smith





# Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact

- Compact endorsed by all eight Great Lakes Governors

## *Highlights*

- Diversions are banned with limited exceptions including straddling communities and counties
- Each state given flexibility to implement the Compact
- Applies to new or increased water uses
- Provides a minimum standard; States may pass more stringent laws



Photo credit: By Andrew K. Smith



# Next steps: Turning the Compact into law

1. Governors endorsed Compact on December 13, 2005 in Milwaukee, WI
2. Every Great Lakes state legislature asked to adopt the Compact
3. Congress asked to give its consent to the Compact



# Done Deal?



- A lot of positive momentum



Photos: Corbis, Eyewire, Corbis





# Every state is a key state

- **Minnesota:** Adopted, February 2007
- **Illinois:** Adopted, August 2007
- **Indiana:** Adopted, February 2008
- **New York:** Adopted, February 2008
- **Ohio:** Active Legislation, Passed 1 chamber
- **Pennsylvania:** Active legislation, Passed 1 chamber
- **Michigan:** Active legislation
- **Wisconsin:** Active legislation, Passed 1 chamber



# Ohio

- House Bill 416, sponsored by Rep. Matt Dolan, passed the House with a vote of 90-3
- Senate Bill 291, sponsored by Sen. Tim Grendell, changes the Compact and could jeopardize the Compact for the entire Region
- Senate should be urged to pass House Bill 416



“I’m from Texas and down there we understand that whiskey is for drinking and water is for fighting over . . . You are going to have to protect your Great Lakes.”

-Former U.S. House Majority  
Leader Dick Armey



Photo: Courtesy of Wildlife Federation





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