



COMPASS

A REPORT FROM THE GREAT LAKES ST. LAWRENCE
GOVERNORS & PREMIERS

JANUARY 2021

CHAIR'S LETTER

In recent months, we have confronted challenges unlike any others in our recent history. Although we continue to struggle with COVID-19 and other issues, the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers are redoubling our efforts to unify our people, grow our regional economy, and improve sustainability.

The U.S. Department of Commerce recently recognized our partnership to promote regional exports with its prestigious "E" award, its highest honor. GSGP's award-winning program has planned its most ambitious program ever of trade missions and events for the next several months. GSGP looks forward to supporting our region's small and medium sized companies to grow international sales for their products and services and help diversify their customer base.

Separately, the Great Lakes Impact Investment Platform has far exceeded its goals since its launch in 2020. The Platform, which GSGP launched in collaboration with The Nature Conservancy, University of Michigan, ECT and other partners, now showcases 16 different projects representing about \$1.7 billion in project value. These projects are aiming to create attractive returns for investors while improving our region's environment. This model for sustainability is set to continue its rapid growth in 2021.



The past twelve months challenged us as never before, but we look ahead to building on our successes, and achieving ambitious goals. We look forward to our continued work together.

— Tony Evers

Chair, Great Lakes St. Lawrence
Governors & Premiers
Governor, State of Wisconsin

GSGP WINS PRESTIGIOUS AWARD FOR EXPORT SERVICE



The Conference of Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers received the President's "E" Award for Export Service. The President's "E" Award is the highest recognition any U.S. entity can receive for making a significant contribution to the expansion of U.S. exports.

U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross said in his congratulatory letter, "The Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers has demonstrated a sustained commitment to export expansion. The "E" Awards Committee was very impressed with your organization's implementation of this unique, non-competitive, cross-border partnership to pool resources in furtherance of export growth for the region. The organization's trade missions over the previous four years that brought 146 companies to 13 foreign markets were also particularly notable. The Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers' achievements have undoubtedly contributed to national export expansion efforts that support the U.S. economy and create American jobs."

[More information on GSGP's International Trade program is available here.](#)



AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

ILLINOIS AND MICHIGAN SIGN AGREEMENT FOR BRANDON ROAD LOCK AND DAM

On January 7, the Governors of Illinois and Michigan agreed to work jointly to protect the Great Lakes from invasive Asian carp species. Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer and Illinois Governor JB Pritzker announced an intergovernmental agreement between the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources which allows Illinois to use up to \$8 million in funds appropriated in 2018 by the Michigan Legislature to support the pre-construction engineering and design (PED) phase of the Brandon Road Ecosystem Project.

Further strengthening the path forward, the State of Illinois also signed a separate PED agreement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the initial Brandon Road design. The state will serve as the non-federal sponsor, agreeing to help fund design of a portion of the project and to further advance full project design efforts to approximately 30 percent completion.

The Brandon Road Lock and Dam in the Chicago Area Waterway System near Joliet, Illinois, is a critical pinch point for keeping bighead, silver and black carp – the invasive Asian carp species of greatest concern – out of the Great Lakes. The Brandon Road project would install layered technologies including an electric barrier, underwater sound, an air bubble curtain and a flushing lock in a newly engineered channel designed to prevent invasive carp movement while allowing barge passage.



Brandon Road Lock and Dam
Photo credit: US Army Corps of Engineers

“The Great Lakes are a priceless natural resource that support the livelihoods of thousands of Illinoisans and attract visitors from across the globe. Protecting the lakes is a top priority for my administration, which is why I included funding for Asian Carp mitigation efforts in my bipartisan Rebuild Illinois capital plan,” said Governor Pritzker. “I am pleased to announce this new partnership with the State of Michigan which, along with additional support from the federal government, will allow the construction of protective measures to begin at the Brandon Road Lock and Dam.”

“Preventing invasive carp from entering the Great Lakes was a day one priority for my administration. We know it’s been a priority for a lot of others, but we needed to take action, and that’s what today’s action represents,” said Governor Whitmer. “The Great Lakes support 1.3 million jobs, including over 350,000 jobs right here in Michigan. That’s why after decades of work, today Michigan, along with the State of Illinois and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, has taken a historic step towards protecting the Great Lakes from Asian carp. I am determined to continue to use every tool at my disposal to keep harmful invasive species from damaging the Great Lakes ecology and our economy.”

As the Brandon Road project moves forward, current efforts will continue, including the electric barriers near Romeoville and expanded nonstructural measures, including focused commercial fishing, monitoring and prescribed netting to reduce the risk of spawning or of small fish movement through the existing lock and dam.

[The complete announcement of the agreement is available here.](#)



REGIONAL BODY & COMPACT COUNCIL PROTECT REGION'S WATERS

In the last year, the Great Lakes St. Lawrence region made significant progress toward improved science and decision making for water use. Under the Governors' and Premiers' leadership, the Regional Body and Compact Council continue to work together to sustainably manage the region's waters.

After two years of work, the Regional Body and Compact Council recently [adopted updated procedures](#) for proposals to use Great Lakes St. Lawrence River Basin water. These procedures focus on regionally significant or potentially precedent-setting water use proposals. The Regional Body and Compact Council engaged with their Advisory Committee and held two public comment periods before adopting the new procedures during their December 2020 meetings.

As part of the ongoing effort to improve science and data, the Regional Body and Compact Council hosted two webinars focused on consumptive use. The webinars feature speakers from government, the indigenous community, the private sector, and academia discussing the current science of consumptive uses and opportunities for improvement. Both webinars are available on the [Regional Body](#) and [Compact Council](#) websites.

Finally, in December, the Regional Body and Compact Council selected new leadership. Premier Legault of Québec became Chair of the Regional Body while Governor Evers of Wisconsin will serve as Chair of the Compact Council. Governor Wolf of Pennsylvania is now Vice-Chair of both organizations. The Chairs and Vice-chair will serve one-year terms. All members of the leadership team will serve in those roles until December 2021.



MARITIME

WEBINAR: BUILDING TRADE BETWEEN WESTERN EUROPE AND THE GREAT LAKES ST. LAWRENCE REGION

On January 21 at 10:00 a.m. EST, join us for a webinar to learn about strategies to grow maritime trade between Western Europe and the Great Lakes St. Lawrence region, and how to leverage the strategic partnership between GSGP and the Port of Antwerp in Belgium. [Click here to register.](#)

Moderator: *Ms. Martine Hébert*, Delegate, Québec Government Office in Chicago; Co-Chair, Governors' and Premiers' Regional Maritime Initiative

Speakers: *Mr. Wim Dillen*, International Development Manager, Port of Antwerp; *Mr. Eric Oberhart*, Senior Consultant, CPCS

GREAT LAKES IMPACT INVESTMENT PLATFORM POISED FOR CONTINUED SUCCESS

Despite the major challenges of 2020, the Great Lakes Impact Investment Platform had a wildly successful year. Since its launch a year ago, the Platform already showcases 16 projects representing \$1.7 billion in project value.

The Platform features projects across four thematic areas - agriculture, energy, forestry, and smart water systems - and four strategies - green bonds, environmental impact bonds, green lending, and real assets.

Four new projects joined the Platform in recent weeks:

- BargerTech's BEST Plan, a revolutionary waste-to-renewable energy, biofuels, and natural fertilizers project designed to protect precious land, air, and water resources.
- Empire State Greenhouses, which will mass-produce up to 50 different types of New York-grown & certified organic crops year-round in 100% renewable energy-powered greenhouses.
- The Conservation Fund's acquisition of 31,000 acres of Minnesota's Heritage Forest. Located in the headwaters area of the Mississippi River, this project supports many of the endangered, threatened, and rare species listed in Minnesota.
- Fresh Coast Protection Partnership, in which Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District is working with a team led by Corvias to implement widespread green infrastructure across a 28-community region.



Minnesota's Heritage Forest
Photo credit: Jay Brittain

Join us on Tuesday, February 16 at 2:00 p.m. EST, for the next Platform webinar.

This webinar will focus on major trends in impact investing. Featured speakers include *Mr. Joshua Humphreys*, President and Senior Fellow of the Croatan Institute, and *Mr. Sean Penrith*, CEO of Gordian Knot Strategies. *Mr. Tapan V. Gandhi*, CFA, Senior Investment Director with Cambridge Associates, will moderate this discussion. [Please register for the webinar here.](#)

For more information, please visit the [Great Lakes Impact Investment Platform](#) website, follow the Platform on [LinkedIn](#), and [sign up for the newsletter](#).



GREAT LAKES
ST. LAWRENCE
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& PREMIERS

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