

GREAT LAKES
ST. LAWRENCE
GOVERNORS
& PREMIERS



ANNUAL REPORT

2021

INTRODUCTION

From 2020-2021, the world faced unprecedented challenges related to COVID-19. While the pandemic put the work of the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers (GSGP) in a different perspective, it also underscored the importance of ensuring basic needs are met. The Governors and Premiers continued to work aggressively to protect the region's environment, people and to support the small and medium sized businesses which provide a livelihood for so many of our region's citizens.

COVID-19 necessarily changed the way we do our work but not the nature of our work. GSGP remains focused on our mission - working hard to serve our region and its people. In the last two years, we notched many notable successes and laid the groundwork for growing together in the future.





MARITIME TRANSPORTATION

The Governors and Premiers have helped build a broad regional coalition in support of their regional maritime strategy. The strategy's goals are to double maritime trade, shrink the environmental impact of the region's transportation network and support the region's industrial core.

Like many parts of our region's infrastructure, the maritime system relies on decades-old construction and desperately needs reinvestment. In 2020, the region achieved a major success--securing US federal government funding and the start of construction of the new Soo Lock. This linchpin of the regional maritime system is critical to the region's industry and economy and will be a cornerstone for the system's future.

New technologies including communications, IT and data sharing systems are revolutionizing global shipping. GSGP created a partnership with Michigan State University's Axia Institute to assess how "smart shipping" can drive value for the regional economy, particularly in the iron ore and steel supply chains. In coming years, GSGP will be working to develop and deploy smart shipping solutions to improve safety, efficiency and environmental performance.

Separately, GSGP collaborated with Green Marine to identify ways that green shipping can cost-effectively improve the region's environment. Going forward, the Governors, Premiers and partners will be working together to implement a green shipping action plan. A near-term focus will be to assess the role advanced biofuels can play in reducing ship emissions.



The Governors and Premiers have created a long-term partnership with the Port of Antwerp in Belgium. Business development, green shipping, smart shipping and the creation of a "smart corridor" between our region and western Europe represent great opportunities for growing our economies and maritime trade.



PROTECTION AND RESTORATION

GSGP led a partnership including The Nature Conservancy, University of Michigan and ECT to develop and launch the Great Lakes (and St. Lawrence) Impact Investment Platform. The Platform is the first of its kind—seeking to harness the growing trend in impact investing that is seeking both a financial return and environmental improvement for the region’s benefit. More than 30 projects representing about \$4 billion in value are already on the Platform, driving major improvements in energy use, emissions, water use, nutrient runoff and land protection.



GREAT LAKES IMPACT
INVESTMENT PLATFORM

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

The Governors and Premiers continue their fight against invasive species, especially invasive carp, that threaten the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence. As efforts continue to build

a new structure at the Brandon Road Lock and Dam in Illinois, GSGP has also been creating new collaborations to develop fresh ideas and tools that can help protect the region’s waters.

In 2020, GSGP held an “Invasive Carp Summit” with the Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association to discuss shared actions. More recently, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources worked with GSGP and held a virtual response exercise focused on silver and bighead carp in a tributary of the Mississippi River.

GSGP partnered with the Invasive Species Centre of Ontario and Quantified Ventures to build a new outcomes-based financing tool for the eradication, management and control of invasive species. This is the first time an environmental impact bond has been designed for this purpose, representing a great opportunity to attract new sources of capital tied to results. Separately, GSGP commissioned the Iceland Ocean Cluster to assess the potential for increased harvesting of silver and bighead carp, particularly in the Mississippi River Basin, as a short-term action to reduce carp populations threatening the Great Lakes. Eradication remains the long-term goal.



INTERNATIONAL TRADE

GSGP's innovative and impactful program to grow the region's international trade earned it the President's "E" Award for Export Service.

The Award is the highest recognition any U.S. entity can receive for making a significant contribution to the expansion of U.S. exports.



GSGP continues to expand its international network of shared trade offices. New offices in Japan, Israel and the Caribbean/Central America, and expanded coverage in Africa, mean that GSGP's network now includes 16 offices, covering over 135 countries on six continents. From 2016-2021, the trade offices assisted with over \$1 billion in facilitated sales. Despite COVID-19, GSGP trade missions continued to introduce small and medium sized companies from our region to potential foreign business partners virtually. Nearly 30 companies took part in recent missions to Australia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and Mexico.

TOURISM

While most tourism paused due to COVID-19, the Governors and Premiers continued to position the region as a destination for tourists seeking a mix of natural beauty, world-class cities, unique attractions and fun activities. GSGP created the Cruise the Great Lakes partnership that now includes about two dozen organizations working together to grow regional cruising. The group developed a Safety Pledge focused on COVID-19 to reassure passengers and to help create the conditions for a safe resumption of cruising in 2022.

When cruising does resume, the region will welcome Viking Cruises to the Great Lakes, joining Victory and Pearl Seas in offering world-class cruising experiences on our waters.



While global tourism came to a standstill due to COVID-19, GSGP's international marketing partnership Great Lakes USA paused its promotion. Programs in China, the United-Kingdom/Ireland and the German-speaking countries are expected to resume as international travel resumes in coming months.



WATER MANAGEMENT

GSGP continued to serve as the Secretariat to the Governors' and Premiers' Regional Body and Compact Council. These groups focus on managing regional water use and diversions, encouraging water conservation and efficiency, and promoting science and research. Recent accomplishments include updating decision-making procedures, implementing the regional science strategy and improving water use data. Ensuring our waters are sustainably used and remain at healthy levels remains a top priority for our Governors and Premiers.



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