

About Great Lakes United

We are citizens, environmental and conservation groups, labour unions, First Nations, tribes, hunters, anglers, academics, and progressive businesses. Together, we work to clean up toxic pollution, stop invasive species, and protect the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

For over 27 years, Great Lakes United has been a unifying voice for ensuring a healthy and vibrant future for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River ecosystem.

We are the only coalition working binationally on Great Lakes Issues. Pollution, invasive species, and other threats to the Great Lakes do not follow arbitrary political boundaries. The responsibility to protect and conserve the Great Lakes is one shared between Canada the United States, and the only way that we can make significant progress is to work together and coordinate our priorities and initiatives.

Our policies and programs are consistently reflected in regulations, laws, and best practices. The progressive positions that our coalition takes today often foreshadow the policies of tomorrow.

Our campaign directors are respected, knowledgeable, and driven. Among our allies, government, industry and the public, we are routinely identified as the leading group on the Great Lakes and regularly consulted for advice and counsel.

Together, we work to clean up toxic pollution, stop invasive species, and protect the waters of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River from damage and irresponsible use.

Our History

Our founding came amid a time of turbulent, and often divisive differences between government agencies, public interest groups, and industry. In the midst of this paralyzing controversy, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River were hurting. Water quality was suffering, industrial pollution was causing disfiguring mutations in the wild, invasive species were suffocating native plants and animals, and excessive nutrient loading put Lake Erie on the brink of death.

At the same time, these individuals saw a watershed with abundant water, a rich aquatic habitat with biologically rich coastal waters, blue ribbon trout streams, and sparkling inland lakes. The largest freshwater ecosystem in the world, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River is a global treasure held as a source of pride for those living on both sides of the border that runs through it.

In May of 1982, concerned individuals from across the region met on Mackinac Island in Michigan, the geographic center of the Great Lakes watershed to forge a new path of cooperation. They recognized that while there was no shortage of organizations fighting to protect this vital ecosystem, finding fidelity amid the noise, and broad cooperation among discriminate interests was sorely needed.

A Respected Voice for the Great Lakes

Great Lakes United has deep expertise on the legislative and regulatory landscape in Canada and the United States as it pertains to environmental issues generally, and water quality and use issues specifically. We are strong advocates for public engagement and trusted professionals.

These traits are reflected in our presence on several advisory panels including:

- Great Lakes Aquatic Nuisance Species Panel
- Great Lakes Regional Waterway Management Forum
- Advisor to the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission
- Environmental Advisor to the Green Marine Initiative
- Observer to the Great Lakes Commission
- Observer to the Binational Executive Committee
- International Joint Commission's Public Interest Advisory Group for the International Upper Great Lakes Study
- Lake Superior Bi-National Forum
- Multi-Stakeholder Work Group on Substances, National Pollutant Release Inventory
- Fisheries Management Zone 20 (Lake Ontario) Advisory Council – Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources
- St. Clair River Binational Public Advisory Council
- Lake Erie Forum
- Agreement Advisory Panel, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Ontario Ministry of the Environment
- The Bi-National Toxics Strategy of EPA and Environment Canada
- Advisor to the Great Ships Initiative

Over the course of that meeting, the blueprint for Great Lakes United was drawn.

Great Lakes United's collective voice has been powerful in articulating the concerns of thousands of citizens and community organizations across a broad spectrum of interests. At its core, we are a coalition that derives strength from its member organizations and, in turn, provides support to them. Our coalition has been and continues to be a powerful catalyst for action.