



**INVITATION TO JOIN THE GREAT LAKES  
CIRCULAR ECONOMY PARTNERSHIP**

*Forging a Future without Plastic Waste in  
the binational Great Lakes region*



**COUNCIL OF THE GREAT LAKES REGION**

**BUILDING OUR FUTURE TODAY**

Discover. Connect. Influence.

# THE GREAT LAKES REGION

- The binational Great Lakes economic region spans **eight states and two provinces**.
- Home to **107 million people**, if a country, the region would be the 12<sup>th</sup> largest country in the world by population.
- With **US\$6.0T** in economic output in 2017, the region would be the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest national economy in the world.
- **52 million jobs**, or one-third of the combined American and Canadian workforce.
- The Great Lakes, with **21% of the world's and 84% of North America's surface freshwater**, is the largest freshwater system in the world.





# PLASTIC WASTE CHALLENGE

- 80% of the region's waste is lost to landfills, including valuable plastic. It's also leaking into the environment. In fact, it is estimated that **22 million pounds of plastic enter the Great Lakes every year<sup>1</sup>**, with microplastics reaching levels as high as 1.25 million particles/km<sup>2</sup> – concentrations on par with what is found in the ocean's garbage patches<sup>2</sup>.
- **Plastic waste lost to landfills and the environment is attributed in part to limited material recycling and reuse opportunities** throughout the region. In Michigan, for example, the overall rate of recycling is below 15 percent, with plastic recycling accounting for less than 10 percent of the total.
- Studies suggest it could cost **\$400 million annually to clean-up and curtail plastic pollution** (e.g. beach and waterway cleanup, public anti-littering campaigns, storm-water capture devices, advanced recycling infrastructure, etc.).

1. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0025326X1630981X?via%3Dihub>  
2. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fenvs.2017.00045/full>

# OUR AMBITION

- **Forging a future without waste and ending waste pollution**, with a focus on plastic, is a monumental task facing the binational Great Lakes economic region and watershed – as well as the rest of the world. There are many challenges ahead; yet, also great opportunities.
- Advancing the collaborations and projects necessary to achieve a Circular Great Lakes is a solution. But, **no one level of government or sector in the Great Lakes has the power, knowledge, and investment** required to embed circularity across the region on their own.
- This is why the Council, working with industry, government, academia, and the non-profit sector, is forging a future without waste and waste pollution in the region through the creation and launch of **the Great Lakes Circular Economy Partnership (GLCEP)**.





## OUR AMBITION (CONT'D)

- Working across all sectors, material value chains, and borders, the GLCEP will leverage CGLR's existing members and alliances, form new collaborations, and mobilize funders and funding to invest in **projects and partnerships that will lead to circular cities and industries and ultimately prevent valuable materials from leaking into the environment and polluting the Great Lakes**, initially focusing on plastic.
- By taking action today through the GLCEP and supporting efforts to change policy, pilot new recycling technology and practices, design and test next generation products, shift consumer behavior, and stop litter from entering the environment, CGLR also aims to **position the binational Great Lakes region as a North American and global leader in building circular cities and sectors and a future without plastic waste.**

# GETTING INVOLVED

Together, we can act swiftly, within a unified, binational effort, to tackle a global problem in the Great Lakes. By joining the GLCEP as a **Knowledge Partner**, you will commit to:

- **Publicly supporting and promoting the GLCEP** and its work to educate consumers, decision-makers, and businesses about, among other things, the importance of materials recovery, recycling and reuse using circular solutions.
- **Participating in periodic meetings of the GLCEP**, virtually or in-person, in 2021 and beyond to discuss Great Lakes circular economy trends, gaps, and opportunities in order to shape regional circular economy priorities, partnerships, and projects, focusing on plastics first.
- **Contributing knowledge, best practices and lessons learned**, in sectors, value chains, and cities, to help the GLCEP form a regional circular economy vision, strategy and action plan for the Great Lakes in 2021, with an initial focus on plastic materials.
- **Reviewing drafts of the circular economy strategy and action plan** in 2021, and providing expert opinions on the soundness of the proposed priorities and actions to ensure the GLCEP is impactful and able to achieve specific targets.
- **Helping CGLR reach out to other Great Lakes stakeholders** from business, academia, and the non-profit sector that are not in the organization's network, and inviting them to participate in the GLCEP.



# 2021-22 TIMELINES AND EVOLUTION

Develop  
(~6-7 months)

Endorse  
(~2-3 months)

Implement  
(5 years)

GOAL	Develop Great Lakes circular economy blueprint and action plan, with an initial focus on plastic.	Seek support of the blueprint and action plan.  Announce and launch action plan.	Implement 5-year Great Lakes plastics action plan
MILESTONES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Announce GLCEP founding members as well as secure other members and partners, including in-kind support.</li> <li>Draft and approve Great Lakes circular economy blueprint and action plan, focusing on plastic.</li> <li>Draft and launch communications plan (e.g. website, social media, Don't Waste Video series, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Solicit support for the strategy and action plan from key Great Lakes organizations.</li> <li>Announce mid-to-long term action plan, transformational projects, partnerships, and investments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiate circular economy projects in the Great Lakes, with an initial focus on plastics.</li> <li>Establish GLCEP as a leader in ending plastic waste and other waste in North America.</li> </ul>



# **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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