CHAIR’S LETTER

For the past five years, I have helped lead the work of the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers. Working together, we have made major accomplishments.

In 2013, I convened our region’s leaders for the first time in many years. On Mackinac Island, we recommitted ourselves to our partnership and created a roadmap for cooperatively tackling some of our region’s biggest challenges.

For example, we re-energized our fight against aquatic invasive species. We identified the “least wanted” species like Asian carp that pose the greatest threat, and rather than wait for the federal governments to act, our States and Provinces took action to significantly bolster our region’s defenses.

We created our region’s first maritime strategy to optimize this under-used system. We launched a new marketing partnership to attract cruise passengers and, after years of inaction, we’ve worked together to finally create the momentum to build a new Soo Lock.

We have shared many successes. We’ve built regional trust and strengthened our institutions to tackle future challenges. Now, we all must continue our hard work—our children, our grandchildren, and our Great Lakes depend on all of us.

It has been my honor to help lead our work together, and I thank all of you for your partnership.

—Rick Snyder
Chair, Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers
Governor, State of Michigan

GOVERNORS & PREMIERS LAUNCH “CRUISE THE GREAT LAKES”

On August 30 on Mackinac Island, GSGP Chair and Michigan Governor Rick Snyder launched “Cruise the Great Lakes,” a new initiative designed to bring more cruise passengers to the Great Lakes.

“I am excited to bring more cruise ships to our wonderful Great Lakes so visitors can experience our fantastic shoreline communities,” Governor Snyder said. “Cruising on the Great Lakes is poised for major growth in the coming years, with significant economic benefits for the entire region.”

The news conference, attended by executives representing the Great Lakes travel industry, coincided with a port of call by Victory Cruise Line’s luxury ship, Victory I, which is in its third year touring the Great Lakes.

GSGP is the organizing body for Cruise the Great Lakes. The initiative is led by representatives from the States and Provinces, and includes partners representing travel and tourism professionals across the region. David Lorenz, vice president of Travel Michigan, serves as the chair of Cruise the Great Lakes.
On August 10, the Governors and Premiers released a Smart Ships Action Plan. The Action Plan includes policy recommendations for the federal governments, States and Provinces, and industry to help the region become a leader in this rapidly growing sector. The regional Smart Ships Coalition is working to implement the Action Plan and establish the region as a global center of excellence for smart ship technologies.

Smart ships represent a major leap forward in maritime technology. Emerging technologies like advanced propulsion and shore-based control are revolutionizing waterborne transportation. Human error is responsible for up to 96% of maritime accidents, and smart ship technologies can leverage investments in training, pilotage, and other safety measures to reduce accidents, in some cases, by eliminating human exposure to hazardous or difficult tasks. Accordingly, in the near term, smart ships are particularly well-suited for research, hazardous response, and operation in dangerous conditions.

The opening of the Marine Autonomy Research Site at Michigan Tech University is another important step for our region and will help accelerate our work to create the needed policies and regulations for smart ships.

The Smart Ships Action Plan is available HERE. More information on the Smart Ships Coalition and the Marine Autonomy Research Site can be found HERE.
October 3 marked the tenth anniversary of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact being signed into law by former President George W. Bush in 2008. The Governors of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin agreed upon the Compact to provide a comprehensive management framework for sustainable water use and resource protection. The Compact also ensured that Great Lakes water would be available for those who most depend on it long into the future. “The Compact was not about parties or politics, but states and provinces across two countries coming together to say we have a common interest in protecting the Great Lakes today and in the future,” said Michigan Governor Rick Snyder. “During the past decade, the Compact has created a process for states to set requirements in order to improve the Great Lakes. It has grown relationships across our region, shaped more economic opportunities, and served as a strong protection against threats to our waters.”

**The Compact’s Ten Years of Results**
- Sustainable use and responsible management of the region’s waters has fostered economic development.
- New water diversions outside of the region have been completely banned. For near-basin communities, there are limited opportunities for diversions when strict requirements are met.
- All ten states and provinces now have programs to regulate water withdrawals from the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence.
- Clear, predictable decision-making procedures and standards have been put in place with ongoing improvements underway.
- Basin-wide water conservation goals and objectives have been adopted, and each of the states and provinces have enacted programs to meet regional goals.
- All ten states and provinces are reporting water usage across the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence.
- Two cumulative impact assessments have been performed to determine the impacts of regional water usage.

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**GREAT LAKES STATES AWARDED $4 MILLION IN EXPORT GROWTH FUNDING**

The US Small Business Administration recently awarded the GSGP member States $3.8 million from its competitive State Trade Expansion Program (STEP). STEP funding is designed to support small to medium-sized companies grow their export sales. Funding can be used for participation for trade missions, foreign market sales trips, export trade shows, website translation, foreign exhibits and international marketing campaigns.

Eligible companies in the Great Lakes region can apply for STEP funding through their State’s International Trade Office to offset mission fees and travel costs for the upcoming GSGP multi-sector trade mission to Brazil and Colombia that will take place from March 24-29, 2019. For more information on this trade mission please visit HERE.
GOVERNORS AND PREMIERS WELCOME PREMIER LEGAULT OF QUÉBEC

On October 18, the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers welcomed Quebec Premier François Legault as the newest member of the GSGP Board of Directors. Premier Legault was elected Premier-designate on October 1. Prior to his election, Premier Legault served as a Member of the Québec National Assembly and worked in the private sector.

GREAT LAKES USA WELCOMES NEW PREFERRED PARTNERS

Great Lakes USA added three new Preferred Partners, bringing the total to fifteen. These Partners enable the region to increase its sales and marketing programs to drive international traffic into the six member states.

The new Preferred Partners are Destination Cleveland, Experience Grand Rapids, and Great Rivers & Routes of Southwest Illinois. The Preferred Partner program allows destinations and attractions within each member state to be part of the international tourism effort and participate in sales missions, trainings, roadshows and events.