

NORTHLAND COLLEGE

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Water Summit Highlights Widespread Bipartisan Support for Great Lakes Restoration

12 Policy Conclusions Include “Staying the Course” with Cleanup of Heavily Polluted Sites

ASHLAND, WI—An expert panel convened by Northland College to consider the future of the federal Great Lakes Restoration Initiative resulted in 12 concrete policy conclusions, including continuing to heavily fund the clean-up of Great Lakes Areas of Concern, which represent some of the most heavily contaminated sites in the region. There was widespread support for continued funding of GLRI, given the transformative impact that the restoration work has had on communities across the region during the last six years.

The panel, which met Oct. 1 at a daylong summit on Madeline Island in Lake Superior, consisted of Great Lakes experts from a mix of industry, nonprofits, tribal government, federal agencies, and academia.

The Summit was sponsored by the Mary Griggs Burke Center for Freshwater Innovation at Northland College, and a policy paper produced from the Summit was released today and will be delivered to all the presidential transition teams as well as Congressional leaders on Capitol Hill.

Major policy conclusions in the White Paper included strengthening partnerships with the private sector and with Canada to leverage more money for both restoration and protection, and making sure GLRI projects more effectively use science to prioritize investments.

The GLRI was launched in 2009 when President Barack Obama approved \$475 million for the first year of restoration work. It has been reauthorized every year since, with strong bipartisan Congressional support, with \$2.2 billion invested in the region so far.

“In recent weeks both major presidential campaigns have expressed support for Great Lakes restoration—that allowed us to focus on concrete policy options for the future,” said Peter Annin, co-director at the Burke Center. “The Summit gave us a chance to listen to the dialogue and hammer out a vision of what the next version of GLRI might look like.”

The effort drew praise from Cameron Davis, senior advisor to the administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, who plays a lead role in overseeing the GLRI, and participated in the summit.

“This event has been really exciting to help all of us get beyond the next week and fiscal year and think ahead in terms of decades and generations,” Davis said.

For more information: northland.edu/watersummit