



## **Passage of Water Compact Essential to Mitigate Impacts of Global Warming, States New National Wildlife Federation Report**

**ANN ARBOR, MI (November 27)**—Global warming’s impacts on the Great Lakes will likely be exacerbated unless inadequate regional water laws are strengthened to prevent water diversion, according to a new report by the National Wildlife Federation.

“The Great Lakes are facing the one-two punch of global warming and water diversion,” said report co-author Noah Hall, an environmental law professor at Wayne State University Law School in Detroit, Mich. “We have known for many years that existing laws are inadequate to protect the Great Lakes from diversions and overuse. Now we know that climate change is certain to put additional stress and pressure on the Great Lakes. Prompt passage of the Great Lakes Compact will go a long way toward mitigating the impacts of global warming while safeguarding a resource that millions of people depend on for their economy and way of life.”

The new report, “Climate Change and Great Lakes Water Resources,” warns that a warming climate is likely to reduce Great Lakes water supply while increasing water demand within the region. Further, as other regions suffer from water shortages and increased demand for water resources, they may look to divert Great Lakes water to quench their thirst. Against this backdrop, the report concludes that the existing legal framework will not be enough to protect the Great Lakes.

“This report is a wakeup call,” said co-author Bret Stuntz, an attorney and geologist in Michigan. “The threats are severe, and the solution is clear: The Great Lakes Compact is perfect for managing 20 percent of the world’s fresh surface water during a time of change in the region and across the United States.”

The report comes as water shortages around the United States are increasing due to both insufficient water conservation policy and drought conditions, and as the specter

of water diversion out of the Great Lakes has propelled the issue into the 2008 Presidential campaign.

“Battles over water are not science fiction. They are occurring now in the United States and around the globe and they will only get worse,” said Molly Flanagan, water program manager for the National Wildlife Federation’s Great Lakes office. “The Great Lakes region has an opportunity to be a leader in managing and protecting our water resources and to set an example for the rest of the country. We cannot afford to sit back and allow others to decide the fate of our Lakes. Now is the time to close the door on future water diversions and put our house in order by passing the Great Lakes Compact.”

The report synthesizes the latest peer-reviewed science on global warming impacts to the Great Lakes and finds that warming temperatures will likely lower lake levels, help invasive species take hold, and lead to more sewer overflows.

It examines current legal framework for protecting the Great Lakes and concludes that they are uniformly inadequate. The report recommends enactment of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact (“Great Lakes Compact”), as an important step in improving Great Lakes water resource policy to meet the challenge of climate change.

“We hope this report inspires legislators, conservationists, and business leaders to work together to protect the Great Lakes by adopting the Great Lakes Compact and national legislation that would deeply reduce the pollution that causes global warming,” said Zoe Lipman, NWF's regional senior manager, global warming. “Without decisive action to address global warming and to protect the water and wildlife of the Great Lakes, all the hard-fought progress made by so many to restore the Great Lakes could be lost. By taking action now we protect this precious resource, our communities, and the economy of our region, for our children and grandchildren.”

Once approved by each of the eight Great Lakes state legislatures and consented to by the U.S. Congress, the Great Lakes Compact will become legally binding and provide for joint management and increased protections for the Great Lakes.

Minnesota and Illinois have already adopted the Compact. The New York Assembly and Senate have passed the Compact and the legislation awaits concurrence from the Assembly which may happen yet this year. Legislation is moving forward in Indiana, Pennsylvania and Michigan and positive momentum for the Compact is building in each of the Great Lakes states.

The [National Wildlife Federation](http://www.nwf.org) is America's conservation organization inspiring Americans to protect wildlife for our children's future.

**To read the full report, visit: <http://www.nwf.org/news/>**

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“The new report makes clear that the question is not how the Great Lakes will be affected by global warming, but whether we as a region will ensure the future health and sustainability of all the Lakes’ water resources by enacting the Compact into law,” said Cecily Smith, Prairie Rivers Network. “For those states that have not yet passed the Compact, this report provides the facts and rationale for why they should make it a priority.”

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“Without the Compact, Lake Michigan and the Great Lakes will remain vulnerable -- both to export abroad and to uncontrolled consumptive uses at home,” said John Goss, Indiana Wildlife Federation. “In Indiana the Great Lakes Compact has broad support from the business community, the environmental and conservation community, and was endorsed by three legislative study committees this fall. We are hopeful that the Indiana legislature will act swiftly to adopt the Compact when they return to session in January.”

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“While it’s difficult to imagine the Great Lakes running out of water, it’s not that difficult to imagine places like Las Vegas, New Mexico, Florida and California running out,” said Donna Stine, Michigan United Conservation Clubs. “When our thirsty neighbors look to us to solve their water shortage problems, we need to be prepared to say no. The Great Lakes Compact gives us the ability to say no. Michigan, a state defined by the Great Lakes, is working steadily towards adopting the Compact and passage of the Compact should remain a priority for the Michigan legislature.”

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“In February, Minnesota became the first state to adopt the Great Lakes Compact because Minnesotans recognize that the Compact is critical for the long-term protection of Lake Superior. This summer Lake Superior reached near record lows. We know that climate change could worsen this situation,” said Gary Botzek, Minnesota Conservation Federation. “It’s not a question of whether or not we need increased protections for the Great Lakes, but rather when we will put them in place. We shouldn’t wait any longer. The Great Lakes states should act immediately to adopt the Compact and protect our precious water resources.”

NEW YORK: Erica Ringewald, Environmental Advocates of New York, (518) 210-9903, [eringewald@eany.org](mailto:eringewald@eany.org)

“The release of the Climate Change and Great Lakes Water Resources report is a much-needed call to action for New Yorkers, as well as for our lawmakers throughout the Great Lakes Basin. We need to seize this opportunity to protect our precious water resources from the threats of climate change,” said Katherine Nadeau, water and natural resources program associate, Environmental Advocates of New York. “Passing the Great Lakes Compact will guarantee New York a voice when it comes to Great Lakes water use. This is particularly important in light of projected water shortages nationwide. The Compact is our opportunity to protect Lakes Ontario, Erie, and the St. Lawrence River Basin. New York should lead the region toward responsible water use and ratify the Compact this year.”

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“It is imperative that the Ohio legislature act swiftly to adopt the Great Lakes Compact,” said Larry Mitchell, League of Ohio Sportsmen. “Lake Erie is the shallowest of the Great Lakes and receives more than 80 percent of its inflow from the Upper Great Lakes making it the most susceptible to injury that could occur if lake water levels fall due to diversions and excessive withdrawals from the waters of the Basin. Lake Erie supports the largest sport fishery in the Great Lakes and the one of the largest commercial freshwater fisheries in the world, underpinning a \$1 billion sport fishing industry. Given the support shown by the Ohio House for ratification last year, adoption of the Compact should be a no-brainer for the General Assembly.”

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“With the predicted impacts of climate change causing significantly lowered Great Lakes water levels and adverse impacts on fish and wildlife habitat, it makes it even more important for the Great Lakes states to immediately pass strong Great Lakes Compact legislation preventing further major diversions of Great Lakes water,” stated George Meyer, executive director, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation. “Wisconsin should act quickly to adopt the Great Lakes Compact and protect our priceless water resources for our children and grandchildren.”