



MIDWEST-GREAT LAKES CHAPTER SOCIETY FOR ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION INTERNATIONAL

Dr. Anthony Kizlauskas
USEPA Great Lakes National Program Office
77 West Jackson Blvd., G-17J
Chicago, IL 60604

Dear Dr. Kizlauskas,

The Midwest-Great Lakes Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration International is a regional SER Chapter that serves a six state area encompassing Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Specifically, our primary mission is to promote the science and practice of ecological restoration to assist with the recovery and management of degraded ecosystems within the Midwestern and Great Lakes regions of the United States.

We, the Executive Board of the Midwest-Great Lakes SER Chapter, are encouraged by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. We feel this new commitment of resources within our Chapter boundaries has great potential to benefit degraded ecosystems within the Great Lakes region. We recognize that the *Great Lakes Multi-Year Restoration Action Plan Outline (Draft: July 17, 2009)* is a work in progress. We provide the following comments and suggestions to assist the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) and its collaborators with revising this *Action Plan* to strengthen this important initiative:

- In general, we agree that the most significant challenges facing the Great Lakes are toxic substances, invasive species, nonpoint source pollution and nearshore impacts, habitat and species loss, and a need for better information to guide decision making.
- We are encouraged that the *Action Plan* outlines a multi-year strategy towards addressing the above challenges and hope it marks the beginning of a longer term commitment beyond the initial five year plan towards the restoration of the Great Lakes.
- Addressing each of the significant challenges will require collaboration among all Great Lakes stakeholders within the United States and Canada and we are pleased to see that the *Action Plan* adopts this approach.
- Funding initiatives should give greatest weight to projects that focus on restoration of the natural processes that create and maintain ecosystem structure and function as well those projects that have the potential to reduce multiple threats to Great Lakes ecosystems.

- Funding should be available for all phases of ecological restoration projects and should include money and resources for planning, design, permitting, implementation, and pre-and post-evaluation. In particular, planning, design, and pre- and post-evaluations are often underfunded despite the importance of these components for ensuring project success.
- It appears that there may be considerable overlap in the objectives of many of the available grant programs. Thus, basin stakeholders may have projects that are eligible for several different grants. We suggest consolidation of some of these grants through inter-agency collaboration as a means to reduce the expenditure of already limited resources available to stakeholders.
- We encourage reduction or elimination of match requirements to encourage a broader array of individuals and organizations to submit proposals for funding consideration.
- We feel that SER's *Primer on Ecological Restoration* and its *Guidelines for Developing and Managing Ecological Restoration Projects* will serve as a valuable resource to assist with future revisions to strengthen the *Action Plan* and subsequently the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. We have attached pdf files of these documents and they are also available from SER's webpage (http://www.ser.org/reading_resources.asp). Specifically, these documents provide valuable guidance for planning, implementing, and evaluating ecological restoration projects and are applicable to restoration of any ecosystem in the world. Specifically, we encourage the application of these principles to the overall Great Lakes Restoration Initiative *Action Plan* and as part of the design, implementation, and evaluation of all smaller sub-projects that will be conducted as part of the larger plan.

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and its associated *Action Plan*. Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or would like additional information.

Sincerely

Executive Board

Midwest-Great Lakes Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration International

Webpage: <http://www.ser.org/content/SERMWGL.asp>

Email: smiley.50@osu.edu