



## Voice of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative in Washington D.C.

The voice of the cities from across the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence basin came through loud and clear in Washington the week of February 22, 2010. Lead by Mayor George Heartwell of Grand Rapids, Chair of the Cities Initiative, we were able to reach some of the highest levels of the U.S. government on issues of great importance to the resource. Mayor Heartwell was joined by Pat Carey of Mayor Daley's staff, Mary Morgan of Mayor Ross' staff, and Dave Ullrich, Executive Director.



Starting with the meeting at the White House with David Agnew, Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs for President Obama, Cameron Davis, Senior Advisor on the Great Lakes to the US EPA Administrator, and two senior officials from the Council on Environmental Quality, the focus of much of the discussion was on the threat of Asian Carp to the Lake Michigan. Mayor Heartwell encouraged the Administration to maintain its sense of urgency in solving this problem, both with short term actions on lock operations and long term to prevent the

movement of live organisms between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River watersheds. The importance of an expanded role for Cities under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, and sustained funding for wastewater infrastructure and many other restoration projects was emphasized. Mayor Heartwell reminded officials at all of our meetings that local governments in the US and Canada are investing over \$15 billion each year to protect and restore the resource.



Mayor Heartwell and Dave Ullrich had a very productive session with Canadian Ambassador to the United States Gary Doer at his office in the Canadian Embassy. Ambassador Doer will be featured as a keynote speaker at our Annual Meeting in June, and has a strong interest in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence. Mayor Heartwell thanked the Ambassador for the Canadian government's support of the efforts to keep Asian carp out of the Great Lakes. Also discussed was the concept of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence as a large heritage area with extra protection for the natural resources while encouraging a robust economy and high quality of life. Mayor Heartwell emphasized the importance of the role of cities under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and the hope for including the St. Lawrence River in the next agreement. The Embassy also hosted a reception for Great Lakes Days, and Mayor Heartwell introduced Senator Debby Stabenow of Michigan to the gathering.

In a meeting with Robert Perciasepe, Deputy Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the focus again was on the Asian carp work and the importance of keeping the sense of urgency in the short, mid, and long term to protect the Great Lakes. There was also much discussion about the importance of Federal support for the work of cities on the Great Lakes, especially in light of the investments the cities are making themselves already. Mary Morgan of Superior attended this meeting along with Mayor Heartwell and Dave Ullrich.

At the U.S. Department of Interior, Mayor Heartwell and Dave Ullrich met with two Deputy Assistant Secretaries of Parks and Fish and Wildlife, Will Shafroth and Jane Lyden. With DAS Shafroth, the concept of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence as a large, protected area was discussed, and a contact was established with their office of National Heritage Areas. The discussion with DAS Lyden was on Asian Carp, and the importance of the Fish and Wildlife Service in enforcing the Lacey Act to prevent the spread of injurious, invasive species and continuing the work to keep them out of the Great Lakes.

Mayor Heartwell, Mary Morgan, and Dave Ullrich also met with Congressman Mike Quigley of Illinois, who holds the seat previously held by White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel, as well as representatives from the offices of Senators Levin and Durbin, and Congressman Kirk. The discussions in these meetings were on Asian carp, Federal funding for the Great Lakes, and the expanding role of Cities.

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee held a hearing on proposed Great Waters legislation, which would include funding and program improvements for the Great Lakes, Chesapeake Bay, Lake Tahoe, San Francisco Bay, Puget Sound, and other water bodies in the U.S. Dave Ullrich was asked to testify and provided information about how management and governance of the resource could be improved.



Mayor Heartwell and Dave Ullrich also attended a meeting with three commissioners from International Joint Commission and two from the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, where Dave serves as a commissioner. The discussion was about how the Commissions could better coordinate their work on invasive species, fish contaminants, water flow controls, and planning.

Pat Carey participated the two day meeting of the Great Lakes Commission as an Alternate Commissioner from Illinois. The GL Commission meeting was opened by Governor Pat Quinn of Illinois, the current chairman, and the commissioners also heard from Jo-Ellen Darcy, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works; Peter Silva, Assistant Administrator for Water at USEPA; Cameron Davis and Chuck Fox, Senior Advisors to the Administrator at USEPA; and Ann Mills, Deputy Undersecretary at USDA. The GL Commission considered and passed a number of resolutions on various topics, including the 2010 legislative priorities, Asian carp, and wind energy. Pat makes sure the local government perspective is brought to the table on all of these issues.

In all, it was an exceedingly successful visit for the Cities Initiative. In less than 72 hours, the Cities Initiative delegation was able to meet with very high levels of the U.S. government and the Canadian Ambassador to carry the message that cities are essential partners and true leaders in the effort to create a sustainable Great Lakes and St. Lawrence with balanced economic, social, and environmental progress.