

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative vs. H2Ohio

Two great programs working to make Lake Erie even better



Though the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) and H2Ohio cover similar ground, they are ultimately different programs. This sheet provides valuable information to limit the confusion surrounding these programs and the importance of continuing to fund H2Ohio.

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)

Established in 2009, the GLRI—a federal program—works with the Great Lakes states to implement restoration projects at the local and state levels.

The GLRI works with 16 federal agencies, including the U.S. EPA, which funds the GLRI through grants. Because the GLRI operates in the Great Lakes Basin, it works with the eight states (IL, IN, MI, MN, NY, OH, PA, WI) within the Basin.

The GLRI's purpose is to provide additional resources to accelerate the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes. This also includes the rivers located within the Basin. The GLRI's goals include creating safe water conditions, limiting nutrient runoff pollution, controlling invasive species, and restoring native species and habitats. For example, in Ohio, the GLRI helps to reduce phosphorus in Lake Erie. For the entire Great Lakes Basin, the GLRI prevented over 2.65 million pounds of phosphorus from fueling algae growth.

H2Ohio

In 2019, Governor DeWine created the state-level H2Ohio program, which is funded through the Ohio General Assembly's biennial budget, to reduce harmful algal blooms and protect Lake Erie. Now, it supports river cleanups, wetland restoration, water infrastructure updates, and better farming practices.

The purpose of H2Ohio is to improve statewide water quality, using data and research to find tangible solutions. Its goals are vast, and some differ from GLRI's. H2Ohio's goals include stopping nutrient pollution that causes harmful algal blooms and improving access to clean drinking water. In contrast, the GLRI focuses on local habitat restoration.

In 2025 alone, because of H2Ohio, 15 water infrastructure projects were funded to improve water access to over 8,000 residents. Over 19,000 new acres of wetland were restored, and almost 500,000 pounds of trash were collected from Ohio rivers, among many other beneficial projects.



Ohio Environmental Council



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Great Lakes Restoration Initiative	H2Ohio
• Federal initiative • Founded: 2009 • Funding: EPA grants • Purpose: To help protect and restore the Great Lakes by providing additional resources • Goals: Create safe water conditions, limit pollution from nutrient runoff, control invasive species, and restore native species and habitats • Scope: Great Lakes Basin, including rivers within the basin. Services IL, IN, MI, MN, NY, OH, PA, WI • Accomplishments: ◦ Controlling invasive species on over 300,000 acres ◦ Prevented over 2.65 million pounds of phosphorus from fueling algae growth ◦ Endangered species projects accelerated the restoration of Great Lakes fisheries collectively valued at \$5.1B ◦ Every federal dollar spent on GLRI projects will produce an additional \$3.35 of economic activity in the region	• State initiative • Founded: 2019 • Funding: Ohio General Assembly biennial budget • Purpose: To improve Ohio's water quality using research to find tangible solutions • Goals: Reduce harmful algal blooms, stop nutrient pollution, remove lead service lines, support better farming practices, reduce road salt runoff, clean up litter, remove dams, and update aging water infrastructure • Scope: Lake Erie, large rivers, wetland restoration, statewide water quality • Accomplishments: ◦ 15 water infrastructure projects funded to improve water access to over 8,000 residents ◦ 3,200 farmers enrolled 2.2 million acres of farmland in nutrient management programs to reduce runoff ◦ Over 19,000 new acres of wetland created ◦ 487,000 pounds of trash collected from Ohio's rivers ◦ 532,000 pounds of phosphorus source load reduction in 2024