



Great Lakes Coastal Assembly

2025 Accomplishments Summary

Last Updated: March 31, 2026

Contents

1. Kicked-off Planning for the 2026 Great Lakes Coastal Symposium
2. Made Progress Toward the Lake Erie Pilot of the Great Lakes Coastal Wetland Framework
3. Advanced the Saginaw Bay to Western Lake Erie Coastal Wetland Conservation Blueprint
4. Drafted a Reference Guide for Islands of Lake Ontario, St. Lawrence and Niagara River Systems
5. Expanded Expertise and Collaboration Through the Coastal Resilience Workgroup
6. Learned from Members and Invited Speakers
7. Welcomed New Members

1. Kicked-off Planning for the 2026 Great Lakes Coastal Symposium

Save-the-Date: October 26-28, 2026, at Sawmill Creek Resort in Huron, OH

The Great Lakes Coastal Assembly began preparations for the 2026 Great Lakes Coastal Symposium, an event for coastal stakeholders including managers, restoration practitioners, scientists, educators, and university students. Huron, Ohio was selected as the location, with Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve as the local host. The event will feature keynote speakers, concurrent sessions, workshops, and field trips tailored to the event location and theme. Audubon Great Lakes and USFWS are co-hosting the event. The Symposium will be held October 26-28, 2026, at Sawmill Creek Resort. Updates will be posted here in the coming months:

<https://www.greatlakescoastalassembly.org/symposium.html>.

Points of contact:

- Janice Kerns, Old Woman Creek NERR, janice.kerns@dnr.ohio.gov
- Stephanie Beilke, Audubon Great Lakes, stephanie.beilke@audubon.org
- Liz Berg, USFWS, elizabeth_berg@fws.gov

2. Made Progress Toward the Lake Erie Pilot of the Great Lakes Coastal Wetland Framework

In 2025, the Great Lakes Coastal Assembly made progress towards the Lake Erie Pilot of the Great Lakes Coastal Wetland Framework (Framework) thanks to leadership from NOAA, USFWS, the Framework Steering Committee, and the Framework Technical Team. Key accomplishments included 1) updates to geospatial datasets depicting coastal wetland extent for the Lake Erie basin, 2) launching an initiative to integrate the Framework decision support tool with the existing Great Lakes Coastal Wetland Decision Support Tool, and 3) targeted outreach to the Lake Erie LAMP and other partners. Upcoming work on the Framework will focus on building and testing the integrated decision support tool. Next steps include 1) developing final geospatial datasets for coastal wetland extent, 2) finalizing the decision support tool, 3) drafting an implementation plan, and 4) hosting partner workshops, culminating in a capstone presentation at the 2026 Great Lakes Coastal Symposium.

Points of contact:

- Liz Berg, USFWS, elizabeth_berg@fws.gov
- Brandon Krumwiede, NOAA, brandon.krumwiede@noaa.gov

3. Advanced the Saginaw Bay to Western Lake Erie Coastal Wetland Conservation Blueprint

Building on foundational work by the Great Lakes Coastal Assembly, the USFWS Midwest Coastal Program and regional partners have continued developing the Saginaw Bay to Western Lake Erie Coastal Wetland Conservation Blueprint. This effort has produced a GIS-based decision support tool (DST) to guide wetland protection, restoration, and data needs while incorporating social and economic considerations. Phase 3 concluded in January 2025, and a new contract supporting the fourth and final phase has now been fully executed. Next, the team will update and migrate the DST to the USFWS platform and reengage stakeholders on the final DST, implementation plan, and associated products with support from a facilitation team. More information can be found here:

<https://www.fws.gov/program/saginaw-bay-western-lake-erie-blueprint>.

Points of contact:

- Jenny Wong, USFWS, jennifer_wong@fws.gov
- Ben Frey, USFWS, benjamin_frey@fws.gov



4. Drafted a Reference Guide for Islands of Lake Ontario, St. Lawrence and Niagara River Systems

There are approximately 32,000 islands in the Laurentian Great Lakes. To help guide priority-setting and project identification, the Great Lakes Islands Conservation Workgroup completed a draft of the first lake-specific reference guide, naming the top 10 islands for high biodiversity value and top 10 most threatened islands in Canada and the United States. The first reference guide focuses on islands of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence and Niagara River Systems. The workgroup plans to develop a reference guide for Lake Erie and the Huron to Erie Corridor next.

Points of contact:

- Matt Preisser, Michigan EGLE, preisserm@michigan.gov
- Jessica Collier, USFWS, jessica_collier@fws.gov

5. Expanded Expertise and Collaboration Through the Coastal Resilience Workgroup

The Coastal Resilience Workgroup continued to build momentum in 2025 as the Great Lakes Coastal Assembly's newest workgroup. Throughout the year, they hosted a series of presentations, including:

- **Engineering with Nature Dune Research** – *Dr. Amanda Tritinger* (USACE)
- **Cradle Beach Shoreline Resilience with Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper** – *Miles Tryon-Petith* (Ramboll)
- **New York Sustainable Sediment Management** – *Olivia Green* (TNC) and *Rewa Phansalkar* (NYS Water Resources Institute)

The workgroup also compiled and shared a curated set of funding and technical resources to help members advance resilience projects across the basin.

Additionally, they helped launch an Ecosystems Task Force, a new collaborative forum meeting every other month to exchange expertise, improve coordination, and contribute to a blueprint for building resilient coastal ecosystems across the Great Lakes.

Points of contact:

- Nate Kroeze, Great Lakes Commission/ USGS, Nkroeze@glc.org
- Jim Luke, USACE, james.d.luke@usace.army.mil



6. Learned from Members and Invited Speakers

Throughout the year, members and guest presenters shared their work during monthly calls and workgroup meetings:

- **Climate-informed restoration: Exploring past restoration efforts in the Great Lakes** – *Wes Bickford* (USGS)
- **Assessing the climate resiliency of Lake Superior coastal wetlands** – *Mike Smale* (WI Sea Grant Fellow)
- **Integrating Great Lakes priorities into the Midwest Conservation Blueprint** – *Alex Wright* (USFWS)
- **Great Lakes Phragmites Collaborative & PAMF Update** – *Kurt Kowalski* (USGS)
- **Engineering & Design Technical Assistance Opportunity** – *Vidya Balasubramanyam* (Coastal States Organization)
- **Lake Erie Sand-Spit Challenges: Restoration Initiatives at Point Pelee National Park** – *Tammy Dobbie* (Parks Canada)
- **Engineering with Nature Dune Research** – *Dr. Amanda Tritinger* (USACE)
- **Cradle Beach Shoreline Resilience with Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper** – *Miles Tryon-Petith* (Ramboll)
- **New York Sustainable Sediment Management** – *Olivia Green* (TNC) and *Rewa Phansalkar* (NYS Water Resources Institute)

7. Welcomed New Members

The Great Lakes Coastal Assembly welcomed several new members in 2025, adding representation from the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, and Loyola University of Chicago. The Assembly now includes 32 organizations and 55 members.

TYPE	ORGANIZATION	MEMBERS
Federal – Canada	Canada Water Agency	2
	Parks Canada	1
Federal – U.S.	Environmental Protection Agency	2
	National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration	3
	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	2
	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	3
	U.S. Geological Survey	3



Binational	Great Lakes Commission	3
	Great Lakes Fishery Commission	1
NGO – Canada	Nature Conservancy Canada	1
NGO – U.S.	Audubon Great Lakes	2
	Coastal States Organization	1
	Ducks Unlimited	2
	The Nature Conservancy	2
	Trout Unlimited	2
State	Illinois DNR	2
	Minnesota DNR	1
	Michigan DNR	2
	Michigan EGLE	3
	New York DEC	1
	New York DOS	1
	Ohio DNR	1
	Ohio Lake Erie Commission	1
	Pennsylvania DEP	2
	Wisconsin DNR	1
	Wisconsin CMP	1
Tribe	Sault Ste. Marie Tribe	3
University	Central Michigan University	1
	Grand Valley State University	1
	MI Sea Grant	1
	MI Natural Features Inventory	1
	Loyola University Chicago	2
TOTAL		55