

Great Lakes Coastal Wetland Conservation Framework

The Great Lakes Coastal Assembly, a multi-national, voluntary partnership, collaborated with over 30 organizations to develop a framework to advance Great Lakes coastal wetland conservation in the U.S. and Canada.



Need

Great Lakes coastal wetlands are critical habitats with high ecological, economic, and cultural importance. There is considerable interest and investment in both the U.S. and Canada to restore, enhance and protect coastal wetlands in the Great Lakes. However, key questions remain regarding basin-wide extent and condition of existing coastal wetlands as well as the area of wetlands needed to achieve desirable conditions and ecosystem services at a lakewide scale.

What

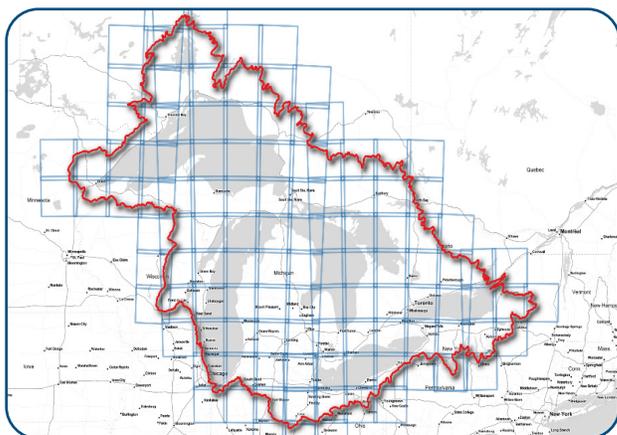
To help meet this need, the Great Lakes Coastal Assembly convened experts from over 30 organizations to define three objectives and develop a framework for coastal wetland conservation in the Great Lakes. Coastal wetlands were defined as all types of wetlands with current hydrologic connectivity to, and directly influenced by, one of the Great Lakes and rivers connecting the Great Lakes.

Objectives

1. Establish existing baseline extent and condition of Great Lakes coastal wetlands
2. Determine extent and condition of coastal wetland types needed to help achieve healthy Great Lakes and coastal communities
3. Identify where to focus coastal wetland efforts to achieve healthy Great Lakes and coastal communities

Products

- Range of total existing wetland acres, wetland acres by geomorphic type or classification type, ecological conditions of existing wetlands, annual variation and change over time, and water level variation
- Qualitative or quantitative desired status for extent and condition for coastal wetland types, that if achieved, represents success
- Family of maps depicting metrics associated with desired status and a decision support tool that helps partners identify where to focus coastal wetland efforts to achieve desired status
- Outreach materials including a publicly available web browser-based dashboard for data access and visualization



Saginaw Bay Wetland (Michigan Sea Grant), Blue-winged Teal (Alex Galt, USFWS), & Sentinel 2 Satellite Tiling Image over the Great Lakes

Where

The framework will be implemented in the Lake Erie basin at a lakewide scale (including Lake St. Clair and the St. Clair and Detroit River) with support from key partners, including the Lake Erie Lakewide Action and Management Plan. Additional training areas outside of Lake Erie will also be included to calibrate models that require a diverse sampling of wetland types. Ultimately, we aim to implement the framework in each of the Great Lakes.

Who

Intended audiences and users of products developed through the framework include land managers, scientists, and funding organizations. Successful implementation of this framework involves putting products into action through decisions that impact on-the-ground conservation activities.

When

NOAA and USFWS submitted GLRI Focus Area 4 (Habitats and Species) funding proposals for FY22. Initial funding has been received to begin work on Objective 1 and the proposal for Objective 2 and 3 funding has received positive feedback. If full funding is awarded, we anticipate developing a scope of work and selecting a contractor in April – September 2022. Pilot implementation would begin October – December 2022. We would expect to make significant progress towards completing the Lake Erie pilot within three years.

Steering Team

The Steering Team will guide implementation of the framework for all three objectives and facilitate collaboration and partner engagement between objectives with assistance from the contractor. The team will be made up of no more than 10-15 members with a strong connection to Lake Erie partnerships and efforts. They will engage key partners and make connections between the framework and conservation efforts in Lake Erie. The Steering Team will work with the contractor to review products and it is expected that the contractor will assist in convening the team, setting meeting agendas, and facilitating discussion.

Partners

| State and Interstate | Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources · Michigan Dept. of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy · Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources · Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources · New York Dept. of Environmental Conservation · Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources · Ohio Lake Erie Commission · Pennsylvania Dept. of Environmental Protection · Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources · Great Lakes Commission · Southeast Michigan Council of Governments **| Federal & Tribal |** Environment and Climate Change Canada · Canada Centre for Remote Sensing · National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration · Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians · U.S. Army Corps of Engineers · U.S. Environmental Protection Agency · U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service · U.S. Geological Survey · Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry **| Nongovernmental |** Ducks Unlimited · Great Lakes Commission · National Audubon Society · The Nature Conservancy · Nature Conservancy of Canada **| Universities |** Central Michigan University · Michigan Sea Grant · Muskegon Community College · Michigan Technological University · SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry

