



Environmental FACT SHEET

905R80127

HIGHLIGHTS

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

GREAT LAKES POLLUTION PREVENTION ACTION PLAN

THE OBJECTIVE

EPA believes the time has come:

- for a highly-focused and action-oriented approach to seeking the goal established under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement of virtually eliminating persistent toxic substances in the Great Lakes; and
- to promote Basinwide pollution prevention efforts as the preferred way of achieving that goal.

THE GAME PLAN

EPA's Pollution Prevention Strategy includes the following principles:

- selecting specific pollutants, sources, and geographic Areas of Concern as the focus of their efforts, such as in Northwest Indiana and the Niagara River;
- setting benchmarks to measure progress toward the goal of virtual elimination;
- focusing institutions and programs throughout the Great Lakes Basin on this effort through the Great Lakes Pollution Prevention Challenge;
- integrating pollution prevention into existing environmental efforts, including permitting, regulatory development, and enforcement; and
- ensuring the involvement of all concerned parties in the public and private sectors through Lakewide Management Plan and Remedial Action Plan processes, the International Pollution Prevention Symposium, and other efforts.

THE GREAT LAKES POLLUTION PREVENTION CHALLENGE

The Governors of the Great Lakes States, in cooperation with EPA, will:

- challenge all sectors of society in the Great Lakes Basin including industry, agriculture, academia, communities, public interest groups and consumers to create and carry out innovative projects to reduce or eliminate releases of pollutants into the Great Lakes ecosystem;
- examine any technical and/or regulatory roadblocks to meeting the Challenge; and
- recognize those who excel in meeting the Challenge.

This Basinwide effort will provide the framework for the following four major initiatives that will be launched under this Action Plan. These initiatives were chosen because, taken together, they address the broad spectrum of pollution prevention opportunities available in the Basin.

AUTO INDUSTRY INITIATIVE

First, in a public/private initiative, EPA and the States will work in conjunction with Chrysler, Ford and General Motors to promote voluntary pollution prevention of persistent toxic substances that adversely affect the Great Lakes.

- These automobile companies will participate with EPA and the States in a basin-wide effort to determine which persistent toxic substances are of greatest concern to the Great Lakes ecosystem. Once priorities have been established, these companies will evaluate which materials are in use in their manufacturing.
- These automobile companies will document their past efforts to reduce the use and generation of these toxic substances; establish priorities for additional in-house pollution prevention efforts; and work with their suppliers to promote pollution prevention.
- Further, these companies will participate in technology transfer forums to share non-proprietary information on pollution prevention techniques and success stories, and participate in similar forums to share information about their efforts to establish pollution prevention as a way of doing business.
- In addition, these automobile companies commit to continue exploring new ways of reducing waste streams.

LAKE SUPERIOR INITIATIVE

As the second major initiative, EPA, in partnership with Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan, will work cooperatively on pollution prevention efforts on Lake Superior. Lake Superior has not experienced the intensive development, urbanization and pollution that characterize of the lower Lakes. It has remained relatively pristine. Although it is the largest of the Great Lakes, Lake Superior is also the most vulnerable to pollution from toxic substances, since toxic substances tend to remain longer in Lake Superior. Once degradation does occur, it takes a longer time for Lake Superior to recover.

Public interest groups support the International Joint Commission's call for strong measures designed to protect the Lake. EPA and the Lake Superior States are committed to:

- Reducing the quantity of persistent toxic substances entering the Lake by building upon and accelerating existing environmental protection programs such as the Remedial Action Plans around Lake Superior.
- Preserving the high quality waters of the Lake by developing and reaching agreement on common procedures to stop degradation.
- Developing an inventory of Lake Superior's problems and reaching a consensus on "critical" pollutants.
- Establishing an improved international air toxic monitoring network in the Lake Superior Basin and conducting modeling to identify the major local and distant sources of pollution.
- Reviewing and strengthening existing environmental criteria for water and air programs and their implementation to ensure that they are adequate to protect the Lake.
- Supporting Minnesota's and Wisconsin's work with the St. Louis River Remedial Action Plan citizen committees and the private sector in developing an overall pollution prevention approach to eliminate or reduce major sources of discharge to the western end of Lake Superior.
- Supporting Minnesota's Lake Superior Project which will consist of an overall inspection/compliance initiative with an emphasis on pollution prevention. This project is geographically focused within the Lake Superior basin and includes the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District, home to most of the major industries in Minnesota's portion of the Lake Superior basin.

URBAN NON-POINT POLLUTION

As the third major initiative, EPA and New York will launch pilot programs in pollution prevention for urban non-point sources. In order to focus on the prevention of urban non-point source discharges in the small quantity generator and household hazardous waste areas, EPA will support New York's efforts to conduct three pollution prevention projects. Specifically:

- New York will conduct an intensive consumer education campaign on household hazardous waste use, disposal and reduction in conjunction with county and municipal governments (Monroe County/Rochester, Erie County/Buffalo, Niagara County/Niagara Falls and Jefferson County/Watertown).
- In addition, fact sheets will be developed to inform the public of the potential dangers of lawn chemicals and to assist them in making responsible lawn maintenance choices.
- New York will also work with smaller towns in these counties to help identify sources of non-point pollution. New York will develop guidance documents to help local officials discern the origin of non-point source discharges as well as to outline potential local courses of action which may be implemented in order to ensure the reduction of such discharges.

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON POLLUTION PREVENTION

EPA will co-sponsor with Canada an International Pollution Prevention Symposium to take stock of current pollution prevention efforts and chart future activities. This Symposium will be held in conjunction with a meeting of the International Joint Commission meeting in Fall 1991 in Traverse City, Michigan.

CONCLUSION

These are some, but by no means all, of EPA's and the State's efforts to prevent pollution and to protect the Great Lakes ecosystem. The efforts are envisioned as ways to enhance and buttress the aggressive regulatory and enforcement programs already in place. For instance, to fulfill their requirements under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, EPA and the States are actively working to:

- Establish consistent water quality standards for the Great Lakes. It is anticipated

that pollution prevention technologies will help dischargers meet these new standards.

- Develop and carry out Remedial Action Plans for each of the 43 Areas of Concern identified by the International Joint Commission. EPA and the States will work diligently to ensure that cleaned up areas remain clean.
- Identify the critical pollutants that threaten each Lake and thus the ecosystem as a whole. This knowledge will enable Federal and State agencies to make informed decisions on the best ways to prevent critical pollutants from entering the Lakes in the first place.

The U.S. Great Lakes Pollution Prevention Action Plan is an important step in breaking the cycle of contamination and cleanup in the Great Lakes. Through EPA/State leadership and partnership, and by example, pollution prevention can become a way of life for all those who live and work in the Basin.