

## **Editorial: Timely help for Lakes**

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Finally, a presidential administration is putting real money -- and honest-to-Goodharbor Bay deadlines -- where its mouth is when it comes to the Great Lakes.

The federal Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Action Plan announced Sunday is as specific as saying, for example, that five toxic "areas of concern" will be cleaned up by 2014, at a pace of roughly one a year. It depends on spending \$2.2 billion over a five-year stretch, with benchmarks and priorities spelled out more clearly than in any report to date on the Great Lakes.

Not that the categories of needed restoratives are anything new: fending off invasive species, cleaning up old toxic hotspots, enhancing wetlands buffers and wildlife habitat, and dealing with agricultural and urban runoff into the water. But this plan is well organized and includes a final category that emphasizes accountability, monitoring, cooperation and ongoing education.

If followed -- and so far **President Barack Obama's** budget has been in line with it -- the action plan will result in measurable improvements. The one glaring inadequacy involves invasive species, for which the deadlines are dubious and inconsistent. Indeed, the current federal response to Asian carp appears to be touted as an exemplar of federal response. That's hardly a sign on which to base optimism.

As another example, a goal to "develop" ballast water treatment by 2014 is a far cry from insisting that all ships entering the lakes treat their ballast water -- a goal that is within reach, via either congressional action or EPA regulation. Yet even in a plan as good as this one, and by an administration predisposed toward the Great Lakes, setting a date certain to enforce ballast water treatment apparently is off-limits.

Yet even as the action plan proves the extent to which invasive species remain a national blind spot, it is otherwise sound and realistic. It can be used as an annual benchmark, both for budgeting and for results. Given the shoddy treatment that the lakes have gotten in the past from the federal government, that's a lot of positives.

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