

The Circular Great Lakes Initiative

Keeping Our Landfills and Waterways Plastic-Free

Proper management of plastic waste in our communities keeps valuable plastics circulating in our economy for as long as possible, out of our landfills and keeps our environment clean and free of plastic litter.

That's why the industry, along with government and other partners, is developing innovative technologies and plans to shift from a culture of disposable products to one focused on reducing waste at the source and repeatedly recovering and reusing valuable materials.



The Circular Great Lakes Initiative, led by the Council of the Great Lakes Region (CGLR), exemplifies these efforts by driving policy change, infrastructure modernization, consumer education, and pollution reduction.



Here are some facts about the Great Lakes and the region, the plastic waste and litter challenges they're facing, and how CGLR is mobilizing diverse stakeholders to make a difference.

A COSTLY REALITY

12.8 million tonnes of recyclable plastics are lost to the region's landfills each year, the equivalent of throwing away **\$2.3B**.

An estimated **22 million pounds** of plastic could be entering the Great Lakes every year, which could cost **\$545M annually** to combat and clean up.

THE GREAT LAKES SUSTAIN OUR WAY OF LIFE

The **largest surface freshwater system** on earth

84% of North America's clean drinking water

The centre of a **\$8.2T regional economy**, North America's industrial heartland



Introducing the Circular Great Lakes Initiative

A TRANSFORMATIVE, BINATIONAL, 5-YEAR PLAN

This plan prioritizes **collaborative projects** and **solutions** to drive a circular economy for plastics and keep waste out of our landfills and waterways.

REDUCING NEW RESOURCE EXTRACTION

This initiative aims to advance solutions that keep **\$2.3B of reusable plastics in circulation** and out of landfills, reducing our reliance on virgin plastics resources.

A COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVE

This initiative is supported by key actors from business, government, academia, and the nonprofit sector.

It is **driving solutions for a circular economy** to keep valuable plastics out of waterways and landfills.

Focusing on 4 Priority Areas of Action



Collection, processing and end market development to achieve a step change in plastics recycling.



Supportive policies to enable and accelerate the shift to a circular economy for plastic products.



Consumer education and engagement to reduce waste at sources, improve recycling rates, and advocate for policy change.



Cleaning up and preventing plastic litter so our environment and the Great Lakes are healthy for future generation.



Environmental Benefits

FEWER PLASTIC MATERIALS IN LANDFILLS



Keeps **3 million tonnes** of additional plastic materials out of our landfills annually

EMISSION REDUCTION



Reduces annual GHG emissions by **2.6 million MTCO_{2e}** – equivalent to taking 560,000 cars off the road for a year.

Economic & Social Benefits

VALUE RECOVERY



Captures more than **\$545 million** in annual economic benefits in the region through commodity value recovery.

DISPOSAL SAVINGS



Generates **\$252 million in savings** in the region from avoided disposal.

JOB CREATION



More than **100,000 jobs** in the Great Lakes Region are added through more effective collection, processing, and manufacturing activities.



What the Plan and CGLR's Partnerships Are Accomplishing

STORMWATER FILTRATION SYSTEM GRANT

These grants fund stormwater filtration systems to reduce plastic pollution in waterways.

BOAT FILM WRAP RECOVERY PILOT

A project creating a circular economy with partners by recycling plastic boat film wraps.

ENHANCED RETAIL TAKE-BACK PILOT

We are developing best practices and toolkits for starting and enhancing retail drop-off programs for flexible plastic packaging and films in the Great Lakes region.

SECONDARY PROCESSING PILOT

We are digging deeper into the Chicago and Great Lakes recycling streams to recover low-volume, difficult-to-manually sort plastics and determine how we can divert this valuable material away from landfills to new markets.

THE GREAT LAKES PLASTIC CLEANUP

This is a first-of-its-kind initiative with Pollution Probe that uses innovative technologies to remove and analyze plastics, allowing us to learn about litter sources and pathways and end plastic pollution.

LEGISLATIVE OUTREACH AND EDUCATION PROGRAM

A program designed to help regional legislators increase their knowledge of materials science and waste management systems so they can make informed policy choices to support the transition to a circular economy.

Take Action

Get involved and help build a resilient, robust recycling system and marketplace for valuable plastics in the region while reducing waste at source and keeping our natural spaces free of plastic litter.



Visit: circulargreatlakes.org

SAVE PLASTIC



COUNCIL OF THE
GREAT LAKES REGION
Solving for Sustainability™