



NEWS

from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

December 7, 1998

Eric Eckl (202) 208-5636

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Hails Great Lakes Restoration Act New Law Shifts Gears from Study to Action, and Cooperation

The reauthorization of the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act, which will accelerate the recovery of lake trout and other fish and wildlife species in the Great Lakes, was hailed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark as a "big step forward." The Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act of 1998, that was recently signed into law by President Clinton on October 19, 1998, directs the Service to shift gears from studies to action on a cooperatively developed priority list in the Great Lakes Basin. The program authorizes up to \$8 million for the effort -- including \$4.5 million that the Service can use to fund projects with its partners on a cost share basis.

"This law recognizes a fundamental truth -- we must work together to restore the Great Lakes," Clark said. "The Service and its many partners have worked over this past year to both renew our commitment on what to do and how to do it. This new legislation puts some of the tools into our hands."

The Act builds on a successful track record of cooperation between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other resource managers in the Great Lakes Basin - state fish and wildlife agencies, tribal governments, fisheries commissions, conservation and sporting groups, and Canadian officials. The *Great Lakes Fishery Resources Restoration Study: A Report To Congress*, cooperatively prepared by the Fish and Wildlife Service along with the states and tribes in the region and completed in September 1995, presents 32 specific recommendations on needed steps to rehabilitate Great Lakes fisheries. In June, 1997, wildlife officials from both sides of the border signed the Joint Strategic Plans for Management of Great Lakes Fisheries, known as SIGLFMP, to outline how various agencies will cooperate in the future to restore the ecology of the Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act of 1998:

- Shifts emphasis from study of species and habitat restoration needs to implementation of restoration projects addressing the 32 recommendations of the "Great Lakes

Office of Public Affairs
1849 C Street, NW
Room 3447
Washington, DC 20240

(202)208-5634
FAX (202)219-2428

- *Fishery Resources Restoration Study: Report to Congress*;
- Provides significant capability to do species and habitat restoration work in the Great Lakes Basin;
- Authorizes \$3,500,000 for each of the fiscal years 1999 through 2004 for activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Great Lakes Coordination and Fishery Resources Offices;
- Authorizes the appropriation of \$4,500,000 per year to the Service to fund restoration projects recommended by the committee. Projects require a minimum 25% match using non-Federal funds. Cash or in-kind contributions are allowed, thus making the funding process flexible, and;
- Establishes a Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Proposal Review Committee that operates under the guidance of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's Council of Lake Committees to recommend projects for funding to the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Act will provide much-needed direction and funding to conduct critical species and habitat restoration work in the Great Lakes Basin; enable partnership formation and efficient use of funds; encourage cooperation among State, Native American Tribal and Federal government agencies; and will result in restored species and habitats and the quality of life and economic benefits that come with them.

Clark, was recently appointed by President Clinton to serve as the Federal delegate to the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission, pointed out that the commercial and sport fisheries are worth an estimated \$4.5 billion each year to the economies of the Great Lakes states. There were 1,824,000 anglers in Michigan, the fourth highest in the nation, who fished almost 30 million days in 1996. 31% of Minnesotans fish, the fifth highest in the nation. Minnesota and Michigan are leaders in sales of fishing equipment, including boats. Illinois is among the top five states for rod and reel sales.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 93-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System comprised of more than 500 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands, and other special management areas. It also operates 66 national fish hatcheries and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered

Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state wildlife agencies.