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## HABITAT AND SPECIES

### Objective

**To provide valuable ecosystem services that will prevent the further loss of habitat and species that contribute to the protection of Great Lakes water quality.**

This new annex of the Canada–United States Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) was created to strengthen collaborative actions in order to contribute to the recovery of native species populations and to achieve a net gain in habitat.

### Why is action on habitat and species important?

The Great Lakes ecosystem provides a critical source of income, water, food and energy, key transport routes, and important spaces for recreation and tourism. Thriving habitats and native fish and wildlife communities contribute to the social and economic vitality of the Great Lakes.

Unfortunately, many human activities put pressure on the ecosystem that results in the loss or degradation of some habitats and threatens the species that those ecosystems support. For example, many coastal habitats such as wetlands are degraded due to shoreline development and hardening and other stressors.

In order to protect water quality, we must support ecosystem health by ensuring the resilience of native species and habitats.

### Commitment to key activities within the 2012 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement

- Within **two years**, complete the development of and begin implementing lakewide habitat and species protection, restoration, and conservation strategies;
- Conduct a baseline survey of existing habitat, establish a basin-wide target of net habitat gain, and measure future progress;
- Assess gaps in current binational and domestic programs as a first step toward developing a binational framework for priority activities;
- Facilitate binational collaborative actions to reduce the loss of native species and habitat, recover populations of native species at risk, and restore degraded habitat;
- Increase awareness of native species and habitat and the methods to protect, conserve, maintain, restore and enhance their resilience;
- Conduct research and monitoring as needed to implement prevention measures that consider the impacts of climate change and other stressors and improve the resilience of native species and habitat.

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## Expected outcomes

- Conserve and restore native species and habitat that contribute to Great Lakes water quality;
- Contribute to the recovery of populations of species at risk and the restoration of degraded habitat;
- Increase habitat areas in the Great Lakes.

Cat. No.: En4-154/2012E-PDF  
ISBN: 978-1-100-20553-3

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