Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

2022 Progress Report

Since 2010, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) has served as a catalyst for unprecedented federal agency coordination to protect and restore the largest system of fresh surface water in the world.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) partners with several federal agencies, including the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to strategically target the biggest threats to the Great Lakes ecosystem and to progress toward achieving long-term restoration goals. NRCS accelerates conservation efforts on private lands located in targeted watersheds throughout the region. Through GLRI, NRCS works with farmers and landowners to protect surface waters from runoff carrying excess sediment and nutrients, to combat invasive species, and to restore wetlands and other habitat areas.

Focus on Critical Source Areas

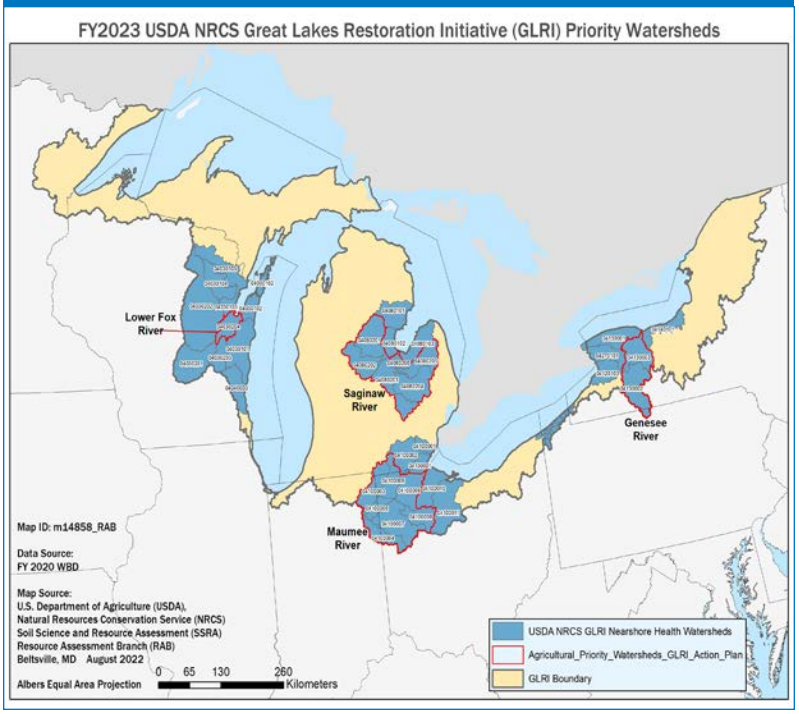
NRCS utilizes GLRI funding to help farmers implement comprehensive, science-based solutions on private lands in priority watersheds where they can deliver the greatest water quality benefits.

Priority watersheds include the Genesee River, Maumee River, Saginaw River and Lower Fox River. These agriculture-dominated watersheds are the watersheds most in need of phosphorus reductions to prevent excess algae growth in the Great Lakes. NRCS offers financial and technical resources to assist farmers and landowners in reducing phosphorus losses from farms and increasing acres under nutrient management each year.

Methods

NRCS employs a suite of conservation practices that avoid losses from fields, control the movement of nutrients and water from fields, and trap sediment and nutrients at the edges of fields, filtering water before it enters into nearby tributaries. The agency primarily utilizes Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to assist farmers in improving water quality by restoring soil health, which reduces soil erosion and nutrient loss, while making agricultural operations more efficient. Priority practices installed under GLRI funding include: nutrient management; residue and tillage management; prescribed grazing; cover crops; wetland restoration; brush management; and herbaceous weed control.

FOCUS AREAS



Amplifying the Impact

NRCS has established numerous partnerships with federal, state, and private organizations to better target conservation for improving water quality in the Great Lakes region. NRCS is proud to be involved in GLRI, working directly with landowners and communities to improve and protect our natural resources and help people help the land. NRCS continues to work with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) through edge-of-field monitoring to track water quality benefits of conservation practices in priority watersheds

GLRI Demonstration Farm participants Dan and Ruth Boerst, Manawa, WI

Fiscal Year 2022 Great Lakes Restoration Initiative NRCS Financial Assistance (EQIP FA) for Active and Completed Contracts

Focus Area	Acres	NRCS Investment	Contracts
Nearshore Health	54,189	$16,536,324	246
Wildlife Habitat	1,630	$513,196	50
Invasive Species	448	$152,877	16

Data source: FPAC Economic Policy Analysis Division, October 2022.

located in Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan, New York, and Indiana. Through GLRI funding, NRCS, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, Purdue University, and USGS are also monitoring soil health improvements in many of these same sites.

Collectively, NRCS offices located in the Great Lakes have entered into dozens of agreements with local conservation partners to provide technical assistance, outreach, education and conservation practice implementation. GLRI Demonstration Farm Networks, created through agreements with conservation partners, showcase cutting-edge water quality and soil health practices on participating farms. The farms host field days and tours for neighboring farms and resource professionals to share their successes and lessons learned in adopting new practices and techniques, including no-till planting, cover crops, low disturbance manure applications, and prescribed grazing. Nine networks involving dozens of farms in four states are motivating other farmers to try these new approaches to benefit their operations and reduce phosphorus delivery to the Great Lakes.

NRCS has also developed a unique partnership with the Great Lakes Commission (GLC) to collaboratively reduce nutrient and sediment loss with an emphasis on a significant reduction of phosphorus loads in the Great Lakes region. GLC has successfully supported over 133 local projects.

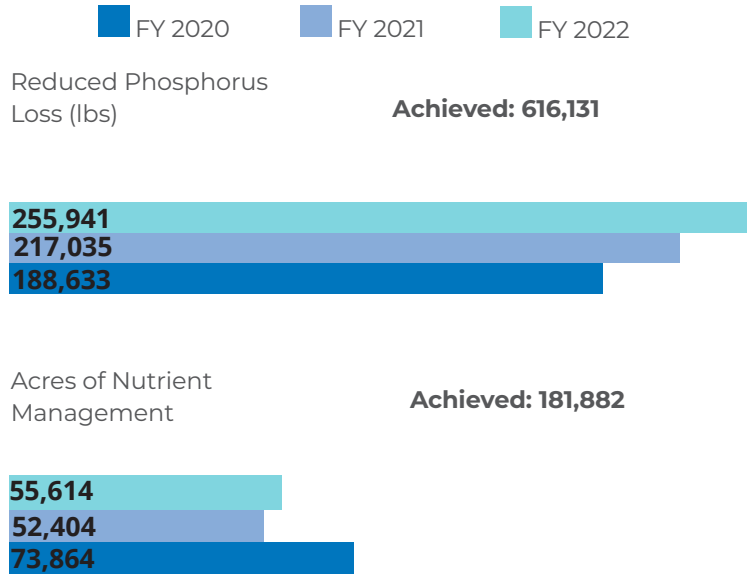
Overall Summary FY 2010-22

Total NRCS Investment $157,385,000

Number of Contracts 3,604

Total Acres Contracted 803,534

GLRI Action Plan III Progress:



For more information on the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, contact: **Matt Otto, GLRI Coordinator at Matt.Otto@usda.gov.**