

Protecting Our Great Lakes

Posted on Oct 10, Posted by [Kathleen Vinehout, State Senator 31st District](#) Category [Wisconsin](#)



The collaborative work of eight states and two Canadian provinces, members of the Great Lakes Compact, protects and enhances the largest group of freshwater lakes in the world despite the potential challenge of large water withdrawals by Foxconn and other businesses in Wisconsin.

MADISON - Our Great Lakes hold twenty-one percent of all the world's fresh surface water. Wisconsin has over 1,000 miles of Great Lakes shoreline. More than half our population lies within its watershed. The Lakes provide us with many opportunities for recreation, commerce, transportation, and immeasurable occasions to enjoy their immense beauty.

Folks are worried about protecting our Great Lakes. Particularly when the state rushed through, about a year ago, a very large corporate subsidy to a Taiwanese company. David Hon of Eau Claire was one of many who wrote, "The environmental exemptions proposed are unfair to the companies that have had to struggle through permitting for good reason. ... [Environmental protections] are there to protect what little is left of natural resources in that part of the state. I'm concerned the Great Lakes Compact would be substantially violated."

The Great Lakes Compact protects our Great Lakes. This agreement between the states and Canadian provinces that border the Great Lakes is enshrined in law.

Wisconsin recently celebrated the tenth anniversary of the signing of this law.



Across the world, citizens worry about where their water will come from and how it will be kept clean. Fear that others would look to divert the water from the Great Lakes, inspired leaders to collaborate to protect our region's incredible water resource. Leaders of areas bordering the Great Lakes formed an agreement between eight states and two Canadian provinces

The anniversary of the Great Lakes Compact is a great opportunity to remember why this arrangement exists and how we all benefit. It also reminds us of the challenges we face while protecting our Great Lakes.

According to *Bridge* a publication of the Center for Michigan, the Great Lakes Compact was forged over five years. The Compact was approved by all eight states bordering the Great Lakes. The Wisconsin State Senate took up the Compact on May 15, 2008. I recall, as a rookie Senator, reading the 250-page bill. Next to the state budget, the Compact was one the most complex pieces of legislation I voted on. The Compact was signed into law by President Bush on October 3, 2008.

The Great Lakes Compact was not limited to just protecting what we have, but it was also designed to improve the Lakes. This work is accomplished through Wisconsin's Great Lakes Strategy and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. According to the Great Lakes Commission, more than \$330 million was invested for more than 400 protection and restoration projects in Wisconsin.

A new report coordinated by the University of Michigan and a host of economists and others showed that every dollar invested in the Great Lakes Initiative project produced \$3.35 of additional economic activity.

