

U.S. Rep. Gallagher: Calls on Canada to address Great Lakes Fishery Commission operations

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-WI), along with Reps. Debbie Dingell (D-MI), Bill Huizenga (R-MI), Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), David Joyce (R-OH), Lisa McClain (R-MI), and Brian Higgins (D-N.Y.), today led a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau urging Canada to address the breakdown within the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and find a long-term solution to resume normal operations, while also respecting Canada’s sovereignty.

“As members of the bipartisan Great Lakes Task Force, we were pleased to hear about the attention given to the Great Lakes during President Biden’s recent visit to Ottawa,” **the lawmakers wrote.** “However, we are concerned by the breakdown in the functioning of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (or Commission), which is responsible for coordinating cross-border fishery management and controlling invasive sea lamprey in the Great Lakes. It is our understanding, that this breakdown can be traced to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), the federal institution responsible for Canada’s custodial obligations to the Commission.”

“Unfortunately, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission’s collaborative process has broken down. Both the U.S. and Canadian sections agree on what the problems are and are calling for change. To date, the Commission has not convened for more than a year, and regular programming for the Commission has not been set since November 2020,” **the lawmakers continued.** “This situation is beyond troubling and, frankly, unacceptable. While DFO has recently agreed to finally provide the necessary funding for 2023, we are concerned that this development, although positive, is not indicative of the permanent change that is necessary to safeguard

the Commission's operations in the long-term; DFO acted only after it was subject to significant and sustained pressure from Members of Parliament."

"As an ally and a neighbor who jointly share the binational responsibility to protect these treasured waters, we respectfully bring this matter to your personal attention and hope you will address these concerns without delay," **the lawmakers concluded.** "The Great Lakes Fishery Commission, more than 50 members of the Canadian Parliament, and many others have asked Minister Joly to assume fiduciary responsibilities for the Commission, which would match the fiduciary arrangement in the United States. That, to us, makes perfect sense and would certainly get this Commission back on track but we also want to be respectful of Canada's sovereignty. We collectively urge you to do everything in your power to find a long-term solution and resume normal operations of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission as soon as possible."

The letter was signed by 25 total members of the House.

The Great Lakes Task Force [wrote a letter to President Biden](#) in March urging him to highlight the importance of Canadian investments in the Great Lakes during his trip to Canada, and [were later encouraged](#) by PM Trudeau's announcement that Canada will invest CAD \$420 million over the next decade to protect and restore the Great Lakes.

See the letter [here](#) or read full text below.

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

We are writing to draw your attention to a matter of great concern regarding the implementation of the Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries of 1954, the bilateral treaty that governs the approach to the Great Lakes fishery between the United States and Canada.

As members of the bipartisan Great Lakes Task Force, we were pleased to hear about the attention given to the Great Lakes during President Biden's recent visit to Ottawa. However, we are concerned by the breakdown in the functioning of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (or Commission), which is responsible for coordinating cross-border fishery management and controlling invasive sea lamprey in the Great Lakes. It is our understanding, that this breakdown can be traced to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), the federal institution responsible for

Canada's custodial obligations to the Commission.

Since its adoption in 1954, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission has been instrumental in addressing shared, binational issues related to the fishery between our two nations, including cross-border fishery management coordination (e.g. involving interstate, interprovincial, and intertribal interactions), directing a binational science program that provides crucial information for management and restoration, and controlling the invasive, destructive sea lamprey that threaten these shared waters. As early as 1897, it was clear that a cooperative approach to managing the Great Lakes fishery was needed, as the existing parochial approach was leading to economic and ecological ruin. The Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries of 1954 successfully addressed this issue and has been highly effective for decades. Thanks to the Commission's tireless work, the fishery has rebounded, native species have recovered, a world-class recreational fishery has emerged along with a wealth of scientific research and information. The Commission truly has united our two nations for our mutual benefit.

Unfortunately, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's collaborative process has broken down. Both the U.S. and Canadian sections agree on what the problems are and are calling for change. To date, the Commission has not convened for more than a year, and regular programming for the Commission has not been set since November 2020. This situation is beyond troubling and, frankly, unacceptable. While DFO has recently agreed to finally provide the necessary funding for 2023, we are concerned that this development, although positive, is not indicative of the permanent change that is necessary to safeguard the Commission's operations in the long-term; DFO acted only after it was subject to significant and sustained pressure from Members of Parliament.

As members representing communities across the Great Lakes Basin, we join the U.S. commissioners on the Great Lakes Fishery Commission in expressing our frustration with the current situation but also to express our strong wish to see both sections resume their work together soon.

As an ally and a neighbor who jointly share the binational responsibility to protect these treasured waters, we respectfully bring this matter to your personal attention and hope you will address these concerns without delay. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission, more than 50 members of the Canadian Parliament, and many others have asked Minister Joly to assume fiduciary responsibilities for the Commission, which would match the fiduciary arrangement in the United States. That, to us,

makes perfect sense and would certainly get this Commission back on track but we also want to be respectful of Canada's sovereignty. We collectively urge you to do everything in your power to find a long-term solution and resume normal operations of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission as soon as possible.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and we stand ready to work with you to find a binational solution, which is critical to the long-term health of the Great Lakes.

Sincerely,