

GREAT LAKES INDIAN FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION

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www.glifwc.org



• MEMBER TRIBES •

MICHIGAN

Bay Mills Community
Keweenaw Bay Community
Lac Vieux Desert Band

WISCONSIN

Bad River Band
Lac Courte Oreilles Band
Lac du Flambeau Band
Red Cliff Band
St. Croix Chippewa
Sokaogon Chippewa

MINNESOTA

Fond du Lac Band
Mille Lacs Band

FY 2026 TESTIMONY – BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES

JASON SCHLENDER, EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATOR

GREAT LAKES INDIAN FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION (GLIFWC)

1. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS, OPERATION OF INDIAN PROGRAMS

- a. **TRUST-NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT, RIGHTS PROTECTION IMPLEMENTATION (RPI):** No less than **\$50,790,000** for FY 2026, the amount enacted by the House of Representatives for FY 2025. An overall need of no less than \$66 million has been identified by the five Commissions funded within RPI, presuming historically proportionate shares for each Commission.
- b. **CONTRACT SUPPORT COSTS:** No less than the \$351 million enacted by the House of Representatives for FY 2025.
- c. **TRUST-NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT, TRIBAL MANAGEMENT/DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (TM/DP):** At least the **\$23,696,000** enacted by the House for FY 2025 and the TM/DP requests of GLIFWC's member tribes.
- d. **TRUST-NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT, FISH/WILDLIFE/PARKS PROGRAM:** At least **\$24,019,000**, the amount enacted by the House for FY 2025.

Funding Authorizations: Snyder Act, 25 U.S.C. s. 13; Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, (P.L. 93-638), 25 U.S.C. ss. 450f and 450h; and the treaties between the United States and GLIFWC's member Ojibwe Tribes.¹

2. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS AND MANAGEMENT, GEOGRAPHIC PROGRAMS, GREAT LAKES RESTORATION: At least **\$368,000,000**, the amount provided in FY 2024 and enacted by the House for FY 2025, including no less than the amount provided in FY 2024 for the Distinct Tribal Program.

Funding Authorizations: Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. s. 1268(c); Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act, Pub. L. 114-322 s. 5005; and treaties cited above.

These programs fulfill federal treaty, trust, and contract obligations to GLIFWC's member tribes, providing vital resources to sustain their governmental programs. We ask that Congress maintain and enhance these programs.

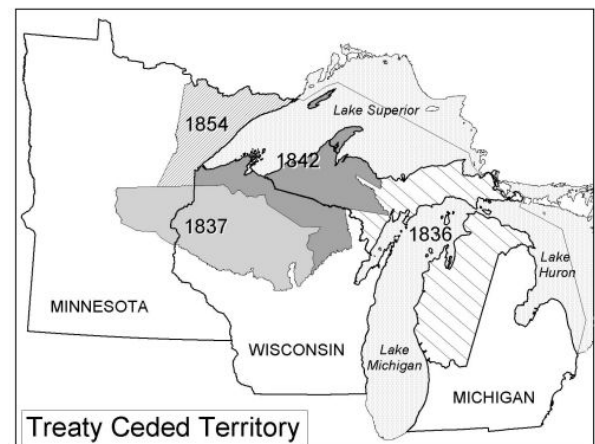
¹ Specifically, the Treaty of 1836, 7 Stat. 491; Treaty of 1837, 7 Stat. 536; Treaty of 1842, 7 Stat. 591; and Treaty of 1854, 10 Stat. 1109. The rights guaranteed by these treaties have been affirmed by various court decisions, including a 1999 US Supreme Court case.

GLIFWC's FY 2026 FUNDING REQUEST HIGHLIGHTS

1. GLIFWC's RPI funding will allow it to continue to implement mandatory federal court orders governing tribal off-reservation treaty rights exercise.
2. Full funding for contract support costs, as required by the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act.
3. Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding of no less than \$368,000,000, as provided in FY 2024 and enacted by the House in FY 2025, with no less than the amount provided in FY 2024 for the Distinct Tribal Program (DTP).

GLIFWC's GOAL – A SECURE FUNDING BASE TO FULFILL TREATY PURPOSES AND LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

For nearly 40 years, Congress has funded GLIFWC, a federally recognized inter-governmental organization², to implement comprehensive conservation, natural resource protection, and law enforcement programs that: 1) ensure compliance with federal court orders that provide the framework within which member tribes exercise their treaty reserved rights to hunt, fish, and gather throughout the ceded territories; 2) enforce violations of the tribes' ceded territory regulations and protect public safety; 3) ensure a healthy and sustainable natural resource base to support those rights; and 4) promote healthy, safe communities. These programs also provide a wide range of public benefits, and facilitate participation in management partnerships in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota.



Established in 1984, GLIFWC is a natural resources management agency of eleven member Ojibwe Tribes with resource management responsibilities over their ceded territory (off-reservation) hunting, fishing, and gathering treaty rights. These ceded territories extend over a 60,000 square mile area in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan.³ GLIFWC employs a small, efficient staff that includes natural resource scientists, technicians, conservation enforcement officers, policy analysts, and public information specialists.

The RPI line item supports the federal government's implementation of its treaty obligations in an efficient and cost-effective manner, by providing funding to the most appropriate local level of government, in this case, intertribal commissions. Funding through the Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act (also known as Public Law 93-638) has proven to involve minimal staff time and bureaucracy. The intertribal commissions use this funding to

² GLIFWC operates in accordance with Government Auditing Standards applicable to tribal governments (OMB Circular A-87) and is audited in conformity with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles as applied to government units.

³ GLIFWC's programs do not duplicate those of the Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority or the 1854 Treaty Authority. GLIFWC also coordinates with its member tribes with respect to tribal treaty fishing that extends beyond reservation boundaries by virtue of the Treaty of 1854 and the reservations' locations on Lake Superior.

ensure the implementation of federal court orders that must be fulfilled. If they are not fulfilled by the commissions the federal government must undertake them directly, which would increase the burden on federal employees and require additional funding.

Because this funding is provided through Public Law 93-638, it is audited under the OMB Uniform Guidance for Single Audits ensuring accountability for all expenditures. GLIFWC is a mature contractor with decades of clean audits. The RPI line item provides an efficient, accountable, cost-effective mechanism to ensure that tribes are in compliance with these legal mandates. We urge the Subcommittee to support the RPI line item at no less than current funding levels and allow the Commission's work to continue unabated. GLIFWC also supports the Tribal Management and Development line-item that allows GLIFWC's member tribes to fulfill their needs for reservation-based natural resource programs and for wetland conservation and restoration through the Circle of Flight program.

With regard to EPA, GLIFWC supports continued funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) as an important geographic non-regulatory program. The GLRI enhances and ensures coordinated, and therefore efficient, governance in the Great Lakes; helps fulfill international agreements; and supports substantive natural resource protection and restoration projects. GLIFWC also supports the GLRI's Distinct Tribal Program ("DTP"). The interagency transfer of funds for the DTP facilitates the effective and efficient contracting of these monies with tribal governments and tribal agencies. The distribution of funds from EPA Region 5 to the BIA's Midwest Regional Office allows GLRI DTP funding to reach tribes efficiently through already-existing contracting mechanisms, again requiring minimal staff time and bureaucracy. Finally, GLIFWC supports the General Assistance Program, an important mechanism for tribes to implement on-reservation environmental priorities and programs.

RESULTS AND BENEFITS OF GLIFWC'S PROGRAMS

- 1. MAINTAIN THE REQUISITE CAPABILITY TO MEET LEGAL OBLIGATIONS AND TO REGULATE TREATY HARVESTS:** At its most basic level, GLIFWC's programs support tribal compliance with court decrees and intergovernmental agreements that govern the tribes' treaty-reserved rights. Funding for science and research enhances GLIFWC's ability to understand changes to ecosystems that impact treaty natural resources. Healthy natural resources benefit all who live or recreate in the Ceded Territories.
- 2. REMAIN A TRUSTED MANAGEMENT AND LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTNER AND SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTOR IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION:** GLIFWC has become a respected and integral part of management and law enforcement partnerships that conserve natural resources and protect public safety. It brings a tribal perspective to interjurisdictional Great Lakes management forums and uses its expertise to study issues and geographic areas that are important to its member tribes but that others may not be examining.
- 3. MAINTAIN THE OVERALL PUBLIC BENEFITS THAT DERIVE FROM ITS PROGRAMS:** Over the years, GLIFWC has become a recognized and valued partner in natural resource management. Because of its institutional experience and staff expertise, GLIFWC has built and maintained numerous partnerships that: i) provide accurate information and data to counter social misconceptions about tribal treaty harvests and the status of ceded territory natural resources; ii) maximize

each partner's financial resources and avoid duplication of effort and costs; iii) engender cooperation rather than competition; and iv) undertake projects that achieve public benefits that no one partner could accomplish alone.

4. **ENCOURAGE AND CONTRIBUTE TO HEALTHY TRIBAL COMMUNITIES.** GLIFWC works with its member tribes' communities to promote the benefits of treaty rights exercise. These include the health benefits associated with a more traditional diet and the intergenerational learning that takes place when elders teach youth. In addition, GLIFWC sponsors a camp each summer where tribal youth build leadership skills, strengthen connections to the outdoors, and learn about treaty rights and careers in natural resource fields.