

# TOWARDS THIS END WE AFFIRM:

This Declaration and the First Principles \* emerge from the collaborative work of people and communities around the lakes. Together we reflect many walks of life, histories and cultures. At the same time, a single purpose unites us: to transition to a mode of Great Lakes governance by which the waters and all living beings can flourish.

*That the waters of the Great Lakes have sustained the lives of the people and communities in their basin since time immemorial and they should continue to do so in perpetuity.*  
*That the waters, ecosystems, and communities of the Great Lakes are entwined and interdependent. Damage to any of these causes harm to the others.*  
*That the Great Lakes are a gift and a responsibility held in common by the peoples and communities of the Lakes and must be treated as such as to ensure their preservation for coming generations.*

*That the boundaries of states, provinces and nations crisscross the Lakes but do not divide their natural integrity. All decisions making that impacts the Great Lakes must place the well-being of the bio-region and ecosystem as a whole at the center of consideration.*  
*That the inherent sovereignty and rights of Indigenous peoples as codified in treaties and international agreements must be upheld as foundational to commons governance.*

# THEREFORE:

We join our voices in affirming the spirit and necessity of this declaration as the foundation for a renewed relationship and mode of governance for our Great Lakes Commons.  
We welcome the wisdom, standing and power that this document will accrue over time to shape the future of our Lakes. We invest it with our hopes and commitments to that future and to the future generations who will inherit the legacy of our actions.  
In signing this Charter, we embrace our responsibility, individual and collective, to act on behalf of these waters and of future generations.



Visit our website to add your name and actions to awaken this Charter Declaration in your inner and outer life.

[www.GreatLakesCommons.org](http://www.GreatLakesCommons.org)

The Great Lakes Commons is a grassroots effort to establish the Great Lakes as a thriving and living commons – shared waters that we all take care of and protect in perpetuity.

Out of our love for the Great Lakes and our responsibilities to future generations, we are calling for a renewed relationship and mode of governance for these waters.

We are asking you to join us.



# GREAT LAKES COMMONS

read, share & awaken our

# Charter Declaration

WE, THE PEOPLE OF THE GREAT LAKES, LOVE AND DEPEND UPON OUR WATERS TO SUSTAIN OUR LIVES, OUR COMMUNITIES AND ALL LIFE IN OUR ECOSYSTEM.

It is therefore with growing alarm that we confront a painful reality – that despite decades of effort the Lakes are more threatened than ever.

As people from across the Great Lakes, we find this unacceptable. We cannot stand by while our waters are treated as an expendable and exploitable resource when we know they are a source of life.

Moved by a hope that we can yet create a thriving and life sustaining future for our Lakes, we step forward to take up our responsibility to care for and act on behalf of these waters, our Great Lakes Commons.

Seeing that the health of our waters is intertwined with our own health and that of generations yet to come, we are called to assert a deeper connection and more powerful role in the future of our waters.

We hereby set forth this Great Lakes Commons Charter, a living document that affirms and empowers the wisdom and rightful role of the people of the Lakes as stewards of our waters.

