

GREAT LAKES MASS MARKING PROGRAM ACT OF 2025

JULY 21, 2025.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. WESTERMAN, from the Committee on Natural Resources,
submitted the following

R E P O R T

[To accompany H.R. 1917]

The Committee on Natural Resources, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 1917) to establish the Great Lakes Mass Marking Program, and for other purposes, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon with an amendment and recommends that the bill as amended do pass.

The amendment is as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Great Lakes Mass Marking Program Act of 2025”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that—

- (1) the Great Lakes have experienced rapid changes in recent years due to—
 - (A) the introduction of multiple aquatic invasive species;
 - (B) alterations in the food web; and
 - (C) decreases in the abundance of prey species;
- (2) due to rapid biological change in the Great Lakes, the Great Lakes need a collaborative, science-based program to assist in making management actions regarding fish stocking rates, the rehabilitation of important fish species, and habitat restoration;
- (3) the States of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, and Wisconsin and Indian Tribes in those States, working through the Council of Lake Committees of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, have identified that mass marking is—
 - (A) a precise tool to keep hatchery-produced fish in balance with wild fish; and
 - (B) essential to achieving fishery management and research objectives through producing a better understanding of—
 - (i) the quantity of hatchery produced fish compared to wild fish in the Great Lakes;
 - (ii) the effectiveness of hatchery operations; and
 - (iii) the effectiveness of fishery management actions;
- (4) the mass marking program of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in the Great Lakes—

- (A) was initiated in 2010 on a limited scale;
- (B) annually tags approximately 9,000,000 to 11,000,000 of the hatchery-produced fish stocked in the Great Lakes;
- (C) is a basinwide cooperative effort among the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Indian Tribes, and State management agencies; and
- (D) produces data used by State and Tribal fish management agencies to make management decisions regarding Great Lakes fisheries;
- (5) annually, Federal, State, and Tribal agencies stock approximately 21,000,000 hatchery-produced fish in the Great Lakes to support—
 - (A) native species recovery; and
 - (B) recreational and commercial fishing;
- (6) mass marking of hatchery-produced fish, using automated technology, is an efficient method of implementing a collaborative, science-based fishery program; and
- (7) the Great Lakes are an important and valued resource that—
 - (A) supports a robust regional economy valued at more than \$7,000,000,000; and
 - (B) provides stability to the economy of the United States.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

- (1) DIRECTOR.—The term “Director” means the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.
- (2) PROGRAM.—The term “Program” means the Great Lakes Mass Marking Program established by section 4(a).

SEC. 4. GREAT LAKES MASS MARKING PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—To assist in determining the effectiveness of hatchery operations and fisheries management actions and to support Great Lakes fisheries, there is established within the United States Fish and Wildlife Service a program for the mass marking of hatchery-produced fish in the Great Lakes basin, to be known as the “Great Lakes Mass Marking Program”.

(b) AUTHORIZED ACTIONS.—In carrying out the Program, the Director may—

- (1) purchase capital and expendable equipment, fish tags, and other items necessary to support and carry out tagging and tag recovery operations, including data processing and data dissemination relating to those operations; and
- (2) hire additional personnel, as necessary.

(c) REQUIRED COLLABORATION.—In carrying out the Program, the Director shall collaborate with applicable Federal, State, and Tribal fish management agencies, the Council of Lake Committees of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, and signatories to the Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Great Lakes Fisheries.

(d) AVAILABILITY OF DATA.—The Director shall make the data collected under the Program available to applicable Federal, State, and Tribal fish management agencies—

- (1) to increase the understanding of the outcomes of management action;
- (2) to assist in meeting the restoration objectives of the Great Lakes, including the fish community objectives and fish management plans described in the Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Great Lakes Fisheries;
- (3) to assist in balancing predators and prey;
- (4) to support and improve the economic status of Tribal, recreational, and commercial fisheries; and
- (5) to assist in evaluating the effectiveness of habitat restoration efforts in the Great Lakes.

SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out the Program \$2,700,000 for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2030.

PURPOSE OF THE LEGISLATION

The purpose of H.R. 1917 is to establish the Great Lakes Mass Marking Program, and for other purposes.

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION

According to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, the tribal, commercial, and recreational fisheries in the five Great Lakes are

home to 177 different species of fish, including 139 native species.¹ These tribal, commercial, and recreational fisheries have an economic value of more than \$7 billion annually² and support up to 75,000 jobs.³

One of the challenges that the Great Lakes' fisheries have faced is the prominence of invasive species that place pressure on native fish populations and their ecosystems.⁴ One species, the Sea Lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*), is native to the Atlantic Ocean but first entered the Great Lakes in the 1920s and 1930s.⁵ In the roughly 100 years since sea lampreys first reached this region, Canada and the United States went from harvesting roughly 15 million pounds of lake trout annually in the upper Great Lakes in the 1940s to roughly 300,000 pounds in the 1960s.⁶ Four carp species—grass, black, bighead, and silver carp—also threaten the Great Lakes' fisheries.⁷

To counter the threat of these invasive species, tribal, federal, and state agencies introduce hatchery fish to encourage native species recovery. For example, in 2018, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources announced that they had introduced more than 21 million fish into the state's waters, including the Great Lakes.⁸ More recently, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) ten hatcheries that support the Great Lakes region introduced more than 4.7 million hatchery fish in all five Great Lakes in 2024.⁹ To gather data on the success of hatchery fish, wildlife managers tag large numbers of these fish through a practice known as mass marking. This practice allows them to easily distinguish hatchery fish from wild fish populations.

H.R. 1917 would codify the FWS's existing Great Lakes Mass Marking Program, which began in 2010. The activities carried out by this program include tagging hatchery fish stocked in the great lakes and assisting in cooperative fisheries management decisions with states and tribes by producing data on the health of the fishery.¹⁰ An amendment was adopted at markup to lower the authorization level to \$2.7 million from Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 through FY 2030 to carry out this program, which is what the Great Lakes Mass Marking Program currently receives in funding.

COMMITTEE ACTION

H.R. 1917 was introduced on March 6, 2025, by Representative Debbie Dingell (D-MI). The bill was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources, and within the Committee to the Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries. On March 25, 2025, the Sub-

¹ Great Lakes Fishery Commission. The Great Lakes Fishery: A world-class resource! <http://www.glfc.org/the-fishery.php>.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ Great Lakes Fishery Commission. Invasive Species. <https://www.glfc.org/invasive-species.php>.

⁵ Great Lakes Fishery Commission. Sea Lamprey: A Great Lakes Invader. <https://www.glfc.org/sea-lamprey.php>.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Great Lakes Fishery Commission. Invasive Carps. <https://www.glfc.org/invasive-carps.php>.

⁸ Manistee News Advocate. DNR: More than 21 million fish stocked in 2018. October 22, 2018.

⁹ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Hatchery Statistics. Prepared For: House Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries. March 14, 2025. <https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/final-great-lakes-hatchery-stocking-fac-march-2025.pdf>.

¹⁰ "Restoring the Great Lakes: Success stories from a decade of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative." Charlie Wooley and Wendi Weber. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. March 2020. <https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/GLRI-Restoring-Great-Lakes-Decade-Retrospective.pdf>.

committee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries held a hearing on the bill. On June 25, 2025, the Committee on Natural Resources met to consider the bill. The Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries was discharged from further consideration of H.R. 1917 by unanimous consent. Chairman Bruce Westerman (R-AR) offered an amendment designated Westerman #1. The amendment was agreed to by unanimous consent. The bill, as amended, was then ordered favorably reported to the House of Representatives by unanimous consent.

HEARINGS

For the purposes of clause 3(c)(6) of House rule XIII, the following hearing was used to develop or consider this measure: hearing by the Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries held on March 25, 2025.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

Section 1. Short title

Section 1 establishes that this Act may be cited as the “Great Lakes Mass Marking Program Act of 2025”.

Section 2. Findings

Section 2 lists Congress’s findings that rapid biological change in the Great Lakes requires a collaborative, science-based program to assist in making management actions regarding fish stocking rates, the rehabilitation of important fish species, and habitat restoration; that various Great Lakes states and tribes have identified mass marking as a precise tool to keep hatchery-produced fish in balance with wild fish, as being essential to achieving fishery management and research objectives, and as an efficient method of implementing a collaborative, science-based fishery program; and that the Great Lakes are an important and valued resource that provide substantial economic benefits.

Section 3. Definitions

Section 3 defines “Director” to mean the Director of the FWS and “Program” to mean the Great Lakes Mass Marking Program.

Section 4. Great Lakes Mass Marking Program

Section 4 authorizes a Great Lakes Mass Marking Program (the Program) within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It requires collaboration with applicable Federal, State, and Tribal fish management agencies, the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission, and signatories to the Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Great Lakes Fisheries. Section 4 also requires the Program to make all data it collects available to applicable Federal, State, and Tribal fish management agencies.

Section 5. Authorization of appropriations

Section 5 authorizes \$2.7 million per year from FY 2026 to FY 2030.

COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding clause 2(b)(1) of rule X and clause 3(c)(1) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Natural Resources' oversight findings and recommendations are reflected in the body of this report.

COMPLIANCE WITH HOUSE RULE XIII AND
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET ACT

1. *Cost of Legislation and the Congressional Budget Act.* Pursuant to clause 3(c)(2) of House rule XIII and section 308(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, and pursuant to clause 3(c)(3) of House rule XIII and section 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the Committee has requested but not received from the Director of the Congressional Budget Office a budgetary analysis and a cost estimate of this bill.

2. *General Performance Goals and Objectives.* As required by clause 3(c)(4) of rule XIII, the general performance goal or objective of this bill is to establish the Great Lakes Mass Marking Program, and for other purposes.

EARMARK STATEMENT

This bill does not contain any Congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits as defined under clause 9(e), 9(f), and 9(g) of rule XXI of the Rules of the House of Representatives.

UNFUNDED MANDATES REFORM ACT STATEMENT

An estimate of federal mandates prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office pursuant to section 423 of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act was not made available to the Committee in time for the filing of this report. The Chair of the Committee shall cause such estimate to be printed in the Congressional Record upon its receipt by the Committee, if such estimate is not publicly available on the Congressional Budget Office website.

EXISTING PROGRAMS

Directed Rule Making. This bill does not contain any directed rule makings.

Duplication of Existing Programs. This bill does not establish or reauthorize a program of the federal government known to be duplicative of another program. Such program was not included in any report from the Government Accountability Office to Congress pursuant to section 21 of Public Law 111-139 or identified in the most recent Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance published pursuant to the Federal Program Information Act (Public Law 95-220, as amended by Public Law 98-169) as relating to other programs.

APPLICABILITY TO LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The Committee finds that the legislation does not relate to the terms and conditions of employment or access to public services or accommodations within the meaning of section 102(b)(3) of the Congressional Accountability Act.

PREEMPTION OF STATE, LOCAL OR TRIBAL LAW

Any preemptive effect of this bill over state, local, or tribal law is intended to be consistent with the bill's purposes and text and the Supremacy Clause of Article VI of the U.S. Constitution.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

As ordered reported by the Committee on Natural Resources, H.R. 1917 would make no changes in existing law.

