



## **GREAT LAKES** Stewardship Initiative

*Expanding classrooms. Strengthening communities.*

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### **Great Lakes Fact Sheet**

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- The total area of the five Great Lakes is more than 94,000 square miles (larger than the states of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, and New Hampshire combined).
- Only Lake Michigan is entirely within the United States. The other four Great Lakes are also bordered by Canada.
- The Great Lakes are home to about 35,000 islands.
- Chicago is the largest city located on the Great Lakes.
- The Great Lakes make up 95 percent of the U.S. freshwater supply.
- Only one percent of the water in the Great Lakes system is replenished each year; the remaining 99 percent is a one-time gift from the melting glaciers.
- The Great Lakes coastal wetlands filter water, provide homes for wildlife, and help prevent erosion.
- The world's largest freshwater dunes lie on Lake Michigan's shoreline.
- Lake Superior is the largest, coldest, and deepest (the average depth is 482 feet) of the five Great Lakes.
- Lake Erie is the warmest and shallowest of the five Great Lakes.
- Lake Ontario is the smallest of the five Great Lakes.
- Lake Huron has the longest shoreline of the five Great Lakes.
- In May 2004, President Bush issued an executive order recognizing the Great Lakes as a “national treasure.”
- The Great Lakes contain 250 different species of fish.
- Since the 1800s, more than 160 aquatic invasive species have become established in the Great Lakes.
- About 120 bands of Native Peoples have occupied the Great Lakes basin over the course of history.
- Lake Huron was the first of the Great Lakes to be discovered by European explorers.
- About 10 percent of the U.S. population and 31 percent of the Canadian population live in the Great Lakes basin.
- The Great Lakes provide drinking water for 40 million people.
- About 80 percent of the U.S. Great Lakes shoreline is privately owned and not accessible to the public. In contrast, just 20 percent of the Canadian Great Lakes shoreline is in private hands.
- The Great Lakes are considered by many to be the economic engine of the Midwest region.
- About 40 percent of the Canadian and 15 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product originates within the Great Lakes basin.